JUNE 12, 2023

NEXT GENERATION LEADERS

TIME



FLORENCE PUGH
IS IN CONTROL
+
9 MORE TRAILBLAZERS SHAPING A BRIGHTER FUTURE

VISIT…

LANZAROTE Caliente.com


RON
FLORIDA GOVERNOR

TIME

VOL. 201, NOS. 21–22 | 2023



A Ron DeSantis event in Coconut Creek, Fla., on Nov. 2, 2022
Photograph by Scott McIntyre—The New York Times/Redux

13
The Brief

31
The View

38
Uh-Oh, AI

Charles Darwin anticipated what makes artificial intelligence an existential threat
By Dan Hendrycks

It's never been more important to slow down
By Katja Grace

China, the U.S., and the rest of the world must convene to set the rules
By Ian Bremmer

44
The DeSantis Project

Florida's strongman governor has made the state a blueprint for conservative governance—and his presidential campaign
By Molly Ball

54
Next Generation Leaders

Florence Pugh and nine other young trailblazers showing the way to a better world

67
Time Off

TIME (ISSN 0040-781X) is published twice a month (except monthly in June and August) by TIME USA, LLC. **PRINCIPAL OFFICE:** 3 Bryant Park, New York, NY 10036. Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y., and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send all UAA to CFS (See DMM 507.1.5.2); **Non-Postal and Military Facilities:** Send address corrections to TIME Magazine, PO BOX 37508 Boone, IA 50037-0508. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement # 40069223. BN# 704925882RT0001. © 2023 TIME USA, LLC. All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A. **CUSTOMER SERVICE AND SUBSCRIPTIONS:** For 24/7 service, please use our website: ***www.time.com/myaccount.*** You can also call 1-800-843-8463 or write TIME Magazine PO Box 37508 Boone, IA 50037-0508. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is strictly prohibited. Your bank may provide updates to the card information we have on file. You may opt out of this service at any time. ◆◆◆◆◆◆◆

NEW!

RECHARGEABLE In-Your-Ear Hearing Aid

BUY 1 GET 1 FREE

~~REG $299.98~~

ONLY $149.99 Each When You Buy a Pair

PLUS FREE SHIPPING
Limited Time Only!



How can a rechargeable hearing aid that fits inside your ear cost only $149.99 be every bit as good as one that sells for $2,400 or more?

The answer: Although tremendous strides have been made in Hearing Aid Technology, those cost reductions have not been passed on to you. Until now...

The MDHearing™ NEO uses the same kind of technology incorporated into hearing aids that cost thousands more at a small fraction of the price. Over 800,000 satisfied MDHearing customers agree: High-quality, digital, FDA-registered rechargeable hearing aids don't have to cost a fortune. **NEO** is a medical-grade, digital, rechargeable hearing aid offering sophistication and high performance; and works right out of the box with no time consuming "adjustment" appointments. You can contact a licensed hearing specialist conveniently online or by phone — even after your purchase at no cost. No other company provides such extensive support. Now that you know...why pay more?

PLUS... It fits inside your ear.

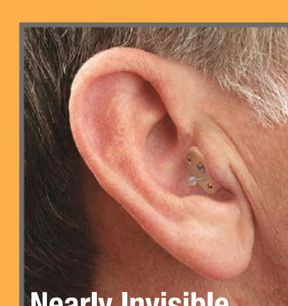
Everything you need in a hearing aid... *EXCEPT THE HIGH PRICE!*

CHARGE AT NIGHT **AND GO** ALL DAY



Our smallest hearing aid ever!

45-DAY RISK-FREE TRIAL!
If you are not completely satisfied with your hearing aids, return them within 45 days for a FULL REFUND!



For the Lowest Price Call
1-800-979-0971
www.TryMDNeo.com

Use Code **GE24** and get **FREE** Shipping

Over 7,000 5-STAR ★★★★★ Google Reviews

MDHearing™
DOCTOR DESIGNED | AUDIOLOGIST TESTED | FDA REGISTERED

Proudly designed in America and supported by US audiologists



AMERICAN CRUISE LINES

Explore the Heartland of America

The Mississippi River

This extraordinary adventure along the legendary Mississippi begins the moment you step aboard our fleet of new American Riverboats. With fewer than 200 guests on board, you will explore local treasures and historic ports along the most storied river in America.







Small Ship Cruising Done Perfectly®

CALL FOR YOUR FREE CRUISE GUIDE 800-913-2493

Redefining leadership



Since TIME's founding, by a pair of 20-somethings, we've known leadership has no age requirement

ONE OF MY FAVORITE STORIES FROM *TIME*'S history goes like this: As 1927 came to an end, the editors seized the chance to correct a serious oversight. They had failed to put Charles Lindbergh on the cover to recognize the 25-year-old's remarkable solo flight over the Atlantic, which he'd completed that May. On what was otherwise a slow news week, they gave themselves a mulligan, and for the first issue of 1928 named Lindbergh "Man of the Year," creating what became one of the most iconic franchises in journalism—what we know today as TIME Person of the Year.

Lindbergh remained the youngest individual to receive the recognition until 2019, when 16-year-old Greta Thunberg was named Person of the Year. These two milestones remind us that leadership has no age requirement. We've known that to be true since TIME's founding a century ago, by a pair of 20-somethings no less. I suspect that is something our readers believe as well: as I wrote in April, nearly half of you are under the age of 35.

That is why I'm so pleased that over the past nine years we've gotten the chance to introduce you all to an impressive group of extraordinary young people via TIME's Next Generation Leaders list, made possible by our partners at Rolex. "To spend time with these individuals is proof of what is possible and what leadership in its multitude of inspiring forms can look like today," says senior editor Emma Barker, who, with senior editor Dayana Sarkisova, led the latest installment of the project.

On the cover, we feature Florence Pugh, a 27-year-old British actor, whom we meet on the cusp of a breakout year with upcoming roles in two highly anticipated movies: Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer* and Denis Villeneuve's *Dune: Part Two.* This is an extraordinary moment for Pugh, a performer who is starting to climb the peaks of her profession. "Despite her youth, she has a drive and assurance," says Villeneuve. "You feel you're working with someone who can absolutely go anywhere and do anything emotionally in the most subtle and precise way. She's a raw diamond."

THE NEXT GENERATION LEADERS list is, as always, a global undertaking, with TIME's reporters and editors scouting what leadership looks like across the planet. In this issue, we spend time with rising stars in places including South Korea, Argentina, and Australia, where Melanie Perkins, a co-founder of tech platform Canva, recently pledged to give away a significant share of equity in her giant startup company. "It was a really easy decision," she says. "How can you do the most good you can do with billions of dollars?"

Perkins' drive to improve the world is shared by Brazil's Rene Silva, who, as an 11-year-old, persuaded teachers at his school to let him join the student newspaper. That effort set him on a journey to launch a paper of his own, covering an entire favela. Today, Silva leads *Voz das Comunidades,* which is dedicated to telling and promoting stories that are frequently overlooked in his country's media.



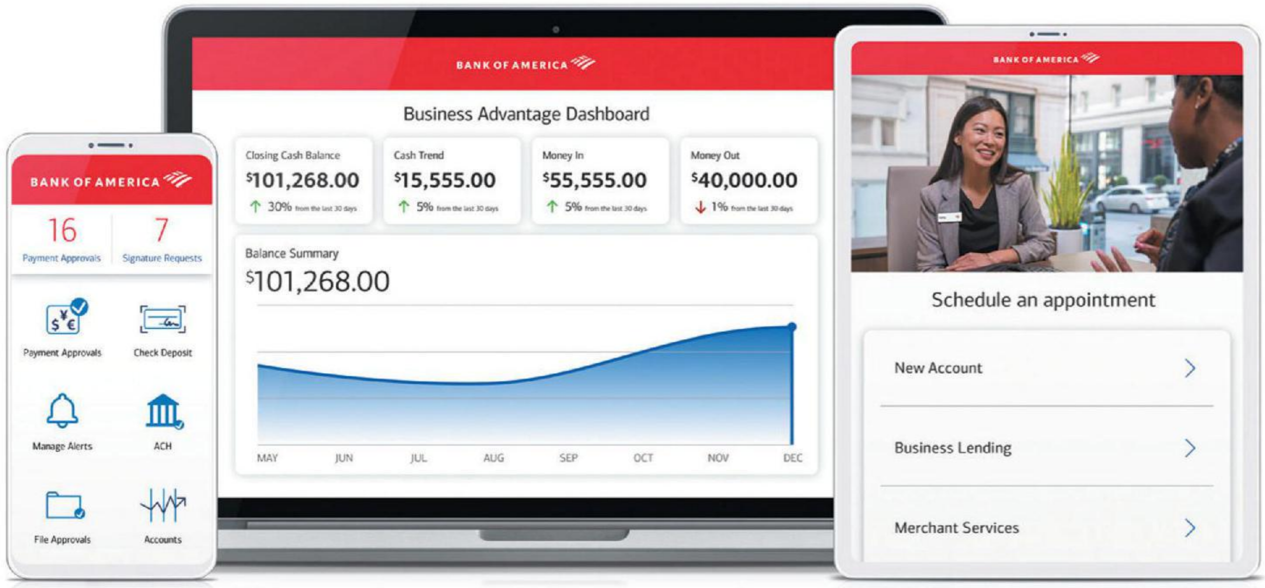
Photographer Mark Peckmezian works with Florence Pugh in New York City on March 18

Pugh, Perkins, and Silva join impressive leaders like activist Sage Lenier, who is leading a solutions-focused approach to the climate fight, and Ivorian American chef Roze Traore, whose journey through the restaurant world and exploration of family history has led him to the Ivory Coast, to create healing and community through food. Together, this class joins the more than 175 individuals recognized as TIME Next Generation Leaders since 2014. At a moment when society's problems can seem insurmountable, it is so inspiring to see these young leaders bring new perspectives and share fresh ideas.

Sam Jacobs,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Business solutions so powerful, you'll make every move matter.



BANK OF AMERICA

What would you like the power to do?®

Learn more at bankofamerica.com/bankingforbusiness

You must be enrolled in Business Advantage 360, our small business online banking, or Mobile Banking to use Cash Flow Monitor and Connected Apps, and have an eligible Bank of America® small business deposit account. Mobile Banking requires that you download the Mobile Banking app and is only available for select mobile devices. Message and data rates may apply.

Screen images simulated. Sequences shortened.

©2023 Bank of America Corporation. All rights reserved. | MAP5423867



Jess Sibley and Verizon's Hans Vestberg in TIME's NYC headquarters

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Eliminating barriers

AT *TIME* WE BELIEVE TRUSTED INFORMATION SHOULD BE available to everyone, everywhere, regardless of where they live or what they can afford to pay. For 100 years that has been our mission—to serve as the world's storyteller, shining a light on the people and the ideas that shape it.

TIME is starting a new chapter in this history: we are offering audiences around the world free access to TIME.com, including TIME's archives dating back to 1923, beginning June 1.

Our goal is simple: work in the service of truth and progress as humanity's trusted guide. Expanding free access to TIME.com for readers worldwide—including our current audience of 105 million, the largest in our history—ensures that we are doing our part to eliminate barriers and improve the world.

When it comes to digital inclusion, there is no leader more focused on bringing access to mobility than Hans Vestberg, chairman and CEO of Verizon, who inspired and supported TIME in this new initiative. When it comes to freedom of information, he says it best: "It is a human right to be connected." As a pioneer of digital inclusion, Hans is committed to getting 1 billion of the world's most marginalized people connected by 2025.

TIME, like Verizon, fundamentally believes that access to trusted information is a global imperative and should be available to everyone.

This has been a personal commitment of mine, and I'm so proud to see it come to life. Information is the backbone of democracy, and it is our job to provide easy and free access to trusted content—to everyone, everywhere.

Jess Sibley,
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

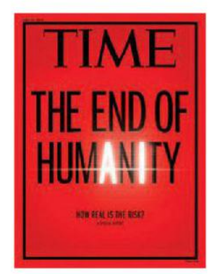
On the covers



Illustration by Tim O'Brien for TIME



Photograph by Mark Peckmezian for TIME

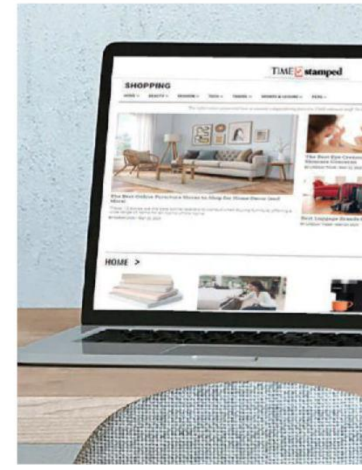


TIME illustration

Looking for a specific cover?
Order your favorites at **timecoverstore.com**

SUBSCRIBE *to TIME's newsletters*

Find all of TIME's email lists at **time.com/newsletters**



TIME Stamped

TIME is excited to announce the launch of its newest product: TIME Stamped. A product-recommendation and e-commerce platform, TIME Stamped aims to help readers decide which services and purchases are best for them in the areas they care about most: travel, fashion, personal finance, technology, home, beauty, sports, pets, and more. The site is editorially independent from the newsroom, but works with the same rigorous standards that are why readers put their trust in TIME. Subject-matter experts at TIME Stamped have already started producing guides and reviews on our most recommended products and services. Visit **time.com/TIMEStamped** to learn more.

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

In "Beyond Bollywood" (May 22/May 29) we misstated Vijay Subramaniam's job. He is Deepika Padukone's agent.

TALK TO US

SEND AN EMAIL:
letters@time.com
Please do not send attachments

FOLLOW US:
facebook.com/time
@time (Twitter and Instagram)

Letters should include the writer's full name, address and home telephone, and may be edited for purposes of clarity and space

Back Issues Contact us at customerservice@time.com, or call 800-843-8463. **Reprints and Permissions** Information is available at time.com/reprints. To request custom reprints, visit timereprints.com. **Advertising** For advertising rates and our editorial calendar, visit timemediakit.com. **Syndication** For international licensing and syndication requests, contact syndication@time.com

Please recycle this magazine, and remove inserts or samples beforehand

Behind every delivery is a well-orchestrated effort.

We're reinventing our network so you can deliver more value, convenience, and confidence to your customers.



Scan the code to see how USPS can move your business forward.
Or visit **usps.com/totaleffort**

©2023 United States Postal Service®. All Rights Reserved.
The Eagle Logo is among the many trademarks of the U.S. Postal Service®.

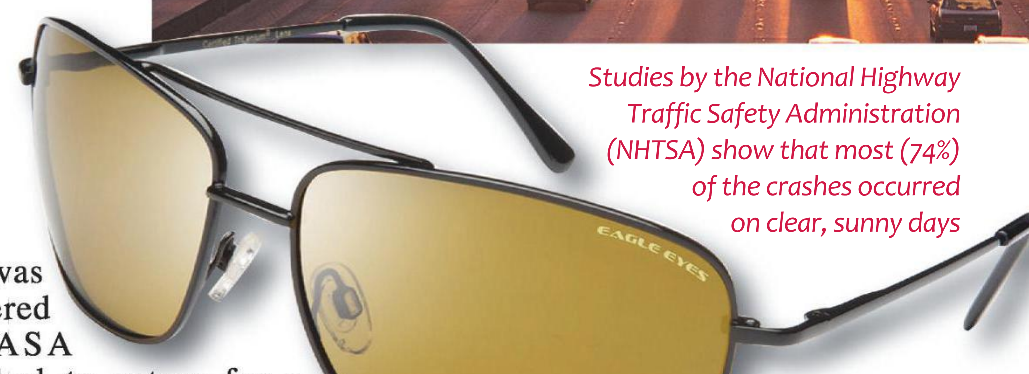
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE®

DELIVERING FOR AMERICA



To some, sunglasses are a fashion accessory…

But When Driving, These Sunglasses May Save Your Life!



Studies by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) show that most (74%) of the crashes occurred on clear, sunny days

Navigator™ Black Stainless Steel Sunglasses

Drivers' Alert: Driving can expose you to more dangerous glare than any sunny day at the beach can… do you know how to protect yourself?

The sun rises and sets at peak travel periods, during the early morning and afternoon rush hours and many drivers find themselves temporarily blinded while driving directly into the glare of the sun. Deadly accidents are regularly caused by such blinding glare with danger arising from reflected light off another vehicle, the pavement, or even from waxed and oily windshields that can make matters worse. Early morning dew can exacerbate this situation. Yet, motorists struggle on despite being blinded by the sun's glare that can cause countless accidents every year.

Not all sunglasses are created equal. Protecting your eyes is serious business. With all the fancy fashion frames out there it can be easy to overlook what really matters—the lenses. So we did our research and looked to the very best in optic innovation and technology.

Sometimes it does take a rocket scientist. A NASA rocket scientist. Some ordinary sunglasses can obscure your vision by exposing your eyes to harmful UV rays, blue light, and reflective glare. They can also darken useful vision-enhancing light. But now, independent research conducted by scientists from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory has brought forth ground-breaking technology to help protect human eyesight from the harmful effects of solar radiation light. This superior lens technology was first discovered when NASA scientists looked to nature for a means to superior eye protection—specifically, by studying the eyes of eagles, known for their extreme visual acuity. This discovery resulted in what is now known as Eagle Eyes®.



Slip on a pair of Eagle Eyes® and everything instantly appears more vivid and sharp. You'll immediately notice that your eyes are more comfortable and relaxed and you'll feel no need to squint. The scientifically designed sunglasses are not just fashion accessories—they are necessary to protect your eyes from those harmful rays produced by the sun during peak driving times.

The Only Sunglass Technology Certified by the Space Foundation for UV and Blue-Light Eye Protection. Eagle Eyes® features the most advanced eye protection technology ever created. The TriLenium® Lens Technology offers triple-filter polarization to block 99.9% UVA and UVB—plus the added benefit of blue-light eye protection. Eagle Eyes® is the only optic technology that has earned official recognition from the Space Certification Program for this remarkable technology. Now, that's proven science-based protection.

CERTIFIED SPACE TECHNOLOGY™ spacefoundation.org

Certified EAGLE EYES® was developed from original NASA Optic technology and was recently inducted into the Space Foundation Technology Hall of Fame.

The finest optics: And buy one, get one FREE! Eagle Eyes® has the highest customer satisfaction of any item in our 20 year history. We are so excited for you to try the Eagle Eyes® breakthrough technology that we will give you a **second pair of Eagle Eyes® Navigator™ Sunglasses FREE––a $59.95 value!**

That's two pairs to protect your eyes with the best technology available for less than the price of one pair of traditional sunglasses. You get a pair of Navigators with stainless steel black frames and the other with stainless steel gold, plus one hard zipper case and one micro-fiber drawstring cleaning pouch are included. Keep one pair in your pocket and one in your car.

Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. If you are not astounded with the Eagle Eyes® technology, enjoying clearer, sharper and more glare-free vision, simply return one pair within 30 days for a full refund of the purchase price. The other pair is yours to keep. No one else has such confidence in their optic technology. Don't leave your eyes in the hands of fashion designers, entrust them to the best scientific minds on earth. Wear your Eagle Eyes® **Navigators** with absolute confidence, knowing your eyes are protected with technology that was born in space for the human race.

Receive the Navigator™ Gold Sunglasses (*a $59.95 value*) **FREE! just for trying the Navigator™ Black**



Navigator™ Gold Stainless Steel Sunglasses

Fit-ons available for $39 +S&H
Black or Tortoise-Shell design



Two Pairs of Eagle Eyes® Navigator™ Sunglasses ~~$119.90~~†

Offer Code Price **$49** + S&P **Save $70.90**

Offer includes one pair each Navigator™ Black and Navigator™ Gold Sunglasses

1-800-333-2045

Your Insider Offer Code: EEN964-06
You must use this insider offer code to get our special price.

Stauer®
14101 Southcross Drive W.,
Ste 155, Dept. EEN964-06
Burnsville, Minnesota 55337
www.stauer.com

ACCREDITED BUSINESS BBB
Rating of A+

† Special price only for customers using the offer code versus the price on Stauer.com without your offer code.

Smart Luxuries—Surprising Prices™

The Brief



IS SOCIAL MEDIA SAFE?

BY ALICE PARK

The U.S. Surgeon General is calling social media use an "urgent crisis" for kids' mental health

INSIDE

TURKEY'S STRONGMAN SURVIVES AGAIN

THE INSIDE STORY OF IRAN'S REVOLT

THE RISE OF 'STRUCTURED HYBRID' WORK

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAKE MICHAELS

EVEN A VIRAL PANDEMIC was not enough to unseat what U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy sees as "the defining public-health crisis of our time." That designation, he says, belongs to concerns about the mental health and well-being of Americans—especially among young people.

On May 23, Murthy published an advisory warning that we don't know enough about how social media in particular is impacting children's emotional states, brain development, and social growth.

"I issued this advisory because this is an urgent crisis," Murthy tells TIME. After analyzing existing studies on social media's effects and consulting with experts, Murthy says there aren't enough data yet to determine whether social media use is safe for children and adolescents. But with 95% of teens ages 13 to 17, and 40% of children ages 8 to 12, saying that they use a social media platform like Instagram or TikTok, Murthy issued a call to action to better understand what social media is doing to the mental health of America's young people.

Murthy acknowledges that children gain some benefits from using social media. The platforms can make it easier to connect with others who share similar interests or experiences, which can help young people understand and process difficult events like loss and change. They can also expose them to new opportunities to learn about different places and ideas.

But the negative effects of social media are becoming increasingly apparent—raising questions about how safe the overall experience is and whether the net effects are more bad than good. Studies have found that using social media can contribute to anxiety, depression, and lower self-esteem among children and teens, and expose them to harassment and abuse, Murthy's report says. Brain-imaging research also suggests that excessive social media use could change the brain in ways that mimic addiction.

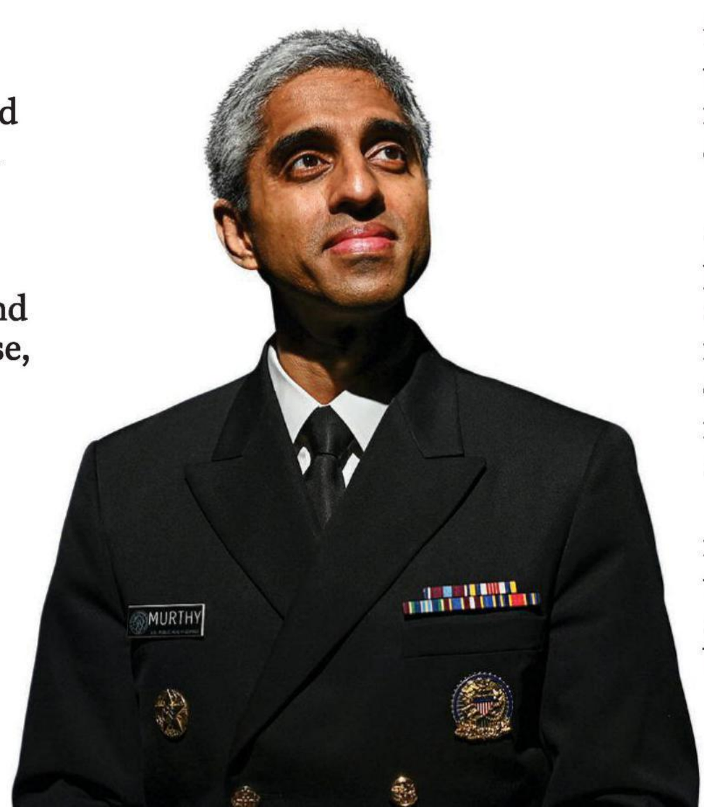
The advisory also outlines how parents, policymakers, researchers, and technology companies can and should come together to make social media safer for children. "I 100% see this as a responsibility for policymakers and technology companies," he says. "Any company that produces a product consumed by kids has a fundamental responsibility to ensure it is safe."

The U.S. government's role, he says, should be to establish safety standards for content and usage for technology companies to follow. But such standards haven't been required for the two decades during which social media platforms have become popular. The burden for ensuring that sites are safe and appropriate for children therefore largely falls on parents.

"We don't ask parents to inspect the brakes on cars that children will ride in, or the ingredients in medications that children use, or ask them to conduct chemical analyses of the paint used in toys made for children to make sure that they are safe," says Murthy. "We set standards and make sure that manufacturers meet them. That's what is missing here."

'I worry about the mental health and well-being of our children.'

—DR. VIVEK MURTHY,
U.S. SURGEON GENERAL



The first step toward creating those standards, he says, is to conduct more studies to better understand how children and teens are using social media, and how their experiences can be made less harmful to their mental health.

A CRITICAL PART of that effort rests with the technology companies, many of which have been reluctant or unwilling to share relevant data from their platforms. "I hear from researchers all the time that they are not able to get full access to the data that they need to fully understand the impact that these platforms are having on children," says Murthy. "As a parent myself, I don't want to feel that there is information hidden from me about the impact products my kids are using may have on their mental health and well-being."

This kind of data could also identify practices that technology companies use to promote continued and excessive use of their platforms, such as likes, comments, and auto-scrolling. Studies show that prolonged engagement on social media often comes at the expense of other activities critical for children's health, like sleep and socialization.

But even without more data, Murthy says policymakers and companies can start making immediate changes to ensure that children aren't harmed by social media. These include creating and enforcing age minimums for accounts and doing a better job of identifying potentially harmful content related to cyberbullying, harassment, and abuse—and keeping it off of children's feeds.

"I acknowledge that companies are trying to take steps to make platforms safer, but it's really not sufficient," says Murthy. "Time matters. Children only have one childhood, and every day, every month, every year matters in the life and development of a child."

The bottom line is that "we have not made enough progress," Murthy says. "As a consequence, I worry about the mental health and well-being of our children." □



Supporters of President Erdogan celebrate his re-election in Istanbul on May 28

THE BULLETIN

What Erdogan's victory means for Turkey—and the world

THE RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN era lives on after the longtime Turkish leader won the May 28 presidential runoff against opposition challenger Kemal Kilicdaroglu. That Erdogan survived the biggest test to his leadership in 20 years is remarkable given the state of Turkey's economy and lingering public anger over the government's response to earthquakes in February that left at least 50,000 people dead. But he has retained his grip on a nation that can serve either as a bridge or an impediment.

CLOSE TO HOME For Turkey's 85 million people, Erdogan's win means "a continuation of today," says Galip Dalay, an associate fellow at the London-based Chatham House think tank. Since first winning as a pious heartland populist in 2003, Erdogan has consolidated power through constitutional changes, eroded the country's democratic institutions, and jailed opponents and critics, many of them journalists.

With five more years at the helm, it's unlikely that Erdogan will choose to reverse Turkey's democratic backsliding, even as the republic marks its 100th year. "When autocrats face an unstable domestic context, they double down on repression," says Gonul Tol, a Turkey expert at the Middle East Institute.

NATO'S FUTURE While the alliance's other members have condemned and imposed sanctions on Russia in the aftermath of its invasion of Ukraine, Turkey has continued to steer its own course with the country. In 2017, Ankara agreed to purchase an S-400 missile-defense system from Moscow. Most controversially, Ankara continues to block Sweden from becoming NATO's 32nd member. Though analysts expect Erdogan to eventually lift Turkey's veto, as he did with Finland, it will be only after leveraging public concessions.

A BOOST FOR AUTOCRATS Under Erdogan, Turkey has joined the ranks of the world's most prominent electoral autocracies. But whereas some of them have been at loggerheads with the West, Turkey maintains a delicate balancing act. Whether that continues will largely depend on the U.S. and, especially, the E.U.

"Is the West ready to confront a more authoritarian Turkey?" asks Tol, noting that Turkey hosts roughly 3.6 million Syrian refugees, and has blocked them from crossing into Europe. "Or are they going to keep this transactional relationship and say, 'As long as Erdogan keeps Syrian refugees in Turkey, we can work with him, we can tolerate him'?"

—YASMEEN SERHAN

The Brief includes reporting by Sanya Mansoor, Simmone Shah, and Julia Zorthian

OPENING PAGE: THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX; MURTHY: RICKY CARIOTI—THE WASHINGTON POST/GETTY IMAGES; TURKEY: SERGEY PONOMAREV—THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX



Iranian protesters on the street in Tehran on Oct. 1

WORLD

How everyday Iranians backed the revolt

BY KAY ARMIN SERJOIE

Revolutions do not happen only in the streets. Yet the outside world knows the uprising in Iran almost entirely through footage uploaded from camera phones—the thousands upon thousands chanting for the fall of the regime in cities and towns across the country, and the regime answering with batons and shotguns. There has been no window into the kitchens and courtyards where the country's fate will be decided.

"I did not think a country could change so much in three months," says journalist Kay Armin Serjoie, reflecting on returning to Tehran last September after a summer in Germany. Serjoie, who has covered his native country for more than two decades, was not allowed to work as a reporter while he remained in Iran. But he remembered what he saw. And, since returning to Europe, he has written it down.

ON AN OCTOBER NIGHT, AT LEAST 600 SECURITY FORCES are arrayed down a two-mile stretch of Tehranpars Street that has been a focus of protests for weeks. Armor-clad police special forces hold intersections. Revolutionary Guards on motorcycles swing clubs at protesters who stand their ground. Middle-aged *basijis* stand outside mosques and government buildings.

The activists, meanwhile, are overwhelmingly young. Many of the women let their hair flow free.

Apart from the two sides, a bigger group circulates—an almost unending sea of young families, elderly couples, and passersby, some just walking up and down the street, some sitting in their cars in the traffic. They are not protesting anything, yet they brave the tear gas, the shouts to move along. They act as if it were just another evening, but they're also giving cover to protesters, who disappear among them to escape the frenzied charges of security forces.

This watchful sea—the silent majority known in Iran as "the gray caste"—fills space vacated by fleeing protesters, almost as if none were ever there. Whenever a plainclothes agent singles out a protester, cornering him or her till reinforcements arrive, the cars commence honking. Passersby suddenly become immobile. Shouts of "Let them go!" rise to deafening levels, stunning the security forces, and many a time giving the protesters just enough time to slip away.

The people on the sidewalks and in the cars—the people with responsibilities, with families to support; the people on whom the future of Iran will pivot—know how to bide their time, waiting for the protests to produce leadership, specific objectives, and definite plans. At which point they just might step in and risk what little the Islamic Republic has left them.

'The fire is still there. It's what in Farsi we call "fire under the ashes."'

—PROTESTING STUDENT

EVERY NIGHT AT 9 the shouts begin. From rooftops, balconies, and windows of dark rooms, women and men, and sometimes even children, huddled into the dark recesses to avoid inquisitive eyes, shout, *"Zan, zendegi, azadi"* (Woman, life, freedom). It started days after Mahsa Amini died in police custody, arrested for how she wore her headscarf. Sometimes the chanting goes for an hour.

In a middle-class Tehran neighborhood, a man asks a 19-year-old neighbor why he endangers his life every night by leading chants in the street and writing slogans on walls.

The young man replies, "Since we were born, we've seen how the regime has been gradually sucking the life out of our parents with inflation,

To read Kay Armin Serjoie's full dispatch, go to **time.com/eyewitness**

MIDDLE EAST IMAGES/IRANWIRE/REDUX

price hikes, limitations on social and personal freedoms. If I have to go, I prefer to go fast."

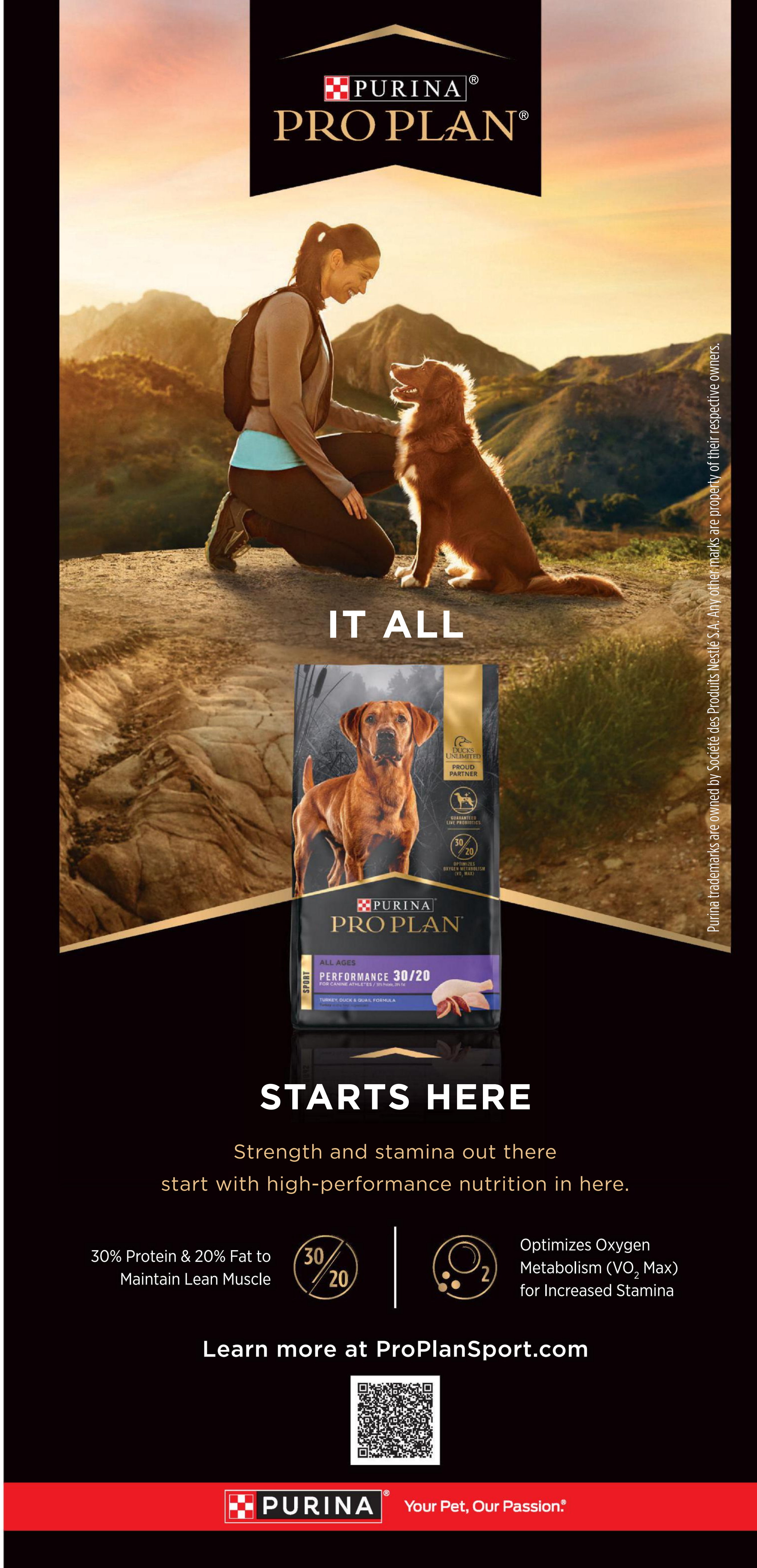
A few nights later, the young man goes out to spray-paint slogans and does not come home. His frantic parents search prisons, police stations, hospitals, and morgues. The neighbor is moved—for now, only as far as the window, where he joins the nightly shouting. "When the time comes," he says, darkly, "I will avenge the kid."

THE REGIME IS WATCHED closely for evidence of weakness. The evidence is everywhere. Neighborhoods that historically supplied the militias that put down dissent have themselves become hotbeds of protest. But the regime is also ruthless. The death toll compiled by human-rights groups, 506 by mid-December, does not take in the grievously wounded. Young women who have lost an eye to bird shot post their new looks proudly on Instagram. But their assailants speed away.

On a cold December night, the security forces on Tehranpars begin closing up shop at 8 p.m. The streets of major cities have seemingly been, to some extent, tamed. And yet, even as the number of protesters has fallen, the gray caste continues to show up to offer them cover. And stores that in previous years pulled down shutters at the first sign of trouble are still open. At one, a young man, out of breath from fleeing police, pauses to share his frustrations. "The problem is there is no direction, no planning," he says, "With the murder the regime is committing every night, the price is too high for what is becoming a blind revolt."

And yet every night, the windows still fly open. And the chants begin.

"It's not over," says another protester, a literature student in her early 20s. "The fire is still there. It's what in Farsi we call 'fire under the ashes.'" □



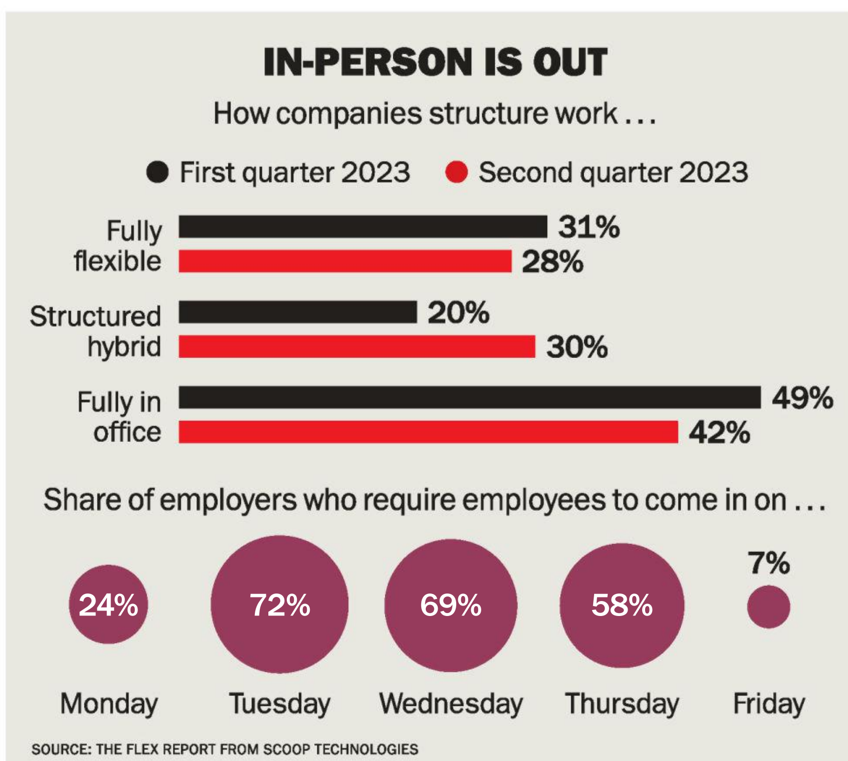
GOOD QUESTION

Is everyone going back to the office yet?

BY ALANA SEMUELS

YOU MIGHT HAVE THOUGHT THAT BY MID-2023, WITH THE pandemic officially over, people would be getting back to the office. But the share of workers in the office full time dropped to 42% in the second quarter of 2023, down from 49% in the first quarter, according to the Flex Report, which collects insights from more than 4,000 companies employing more than 100 million people globally. Meanwhile, the share of offices with hybrid work arrangements hit 30% in the quarter, up from 20% the previous quarter.

"It certainly looks like hybrid is gaining share," says Robert Sadow, the CEO and co-founder of Scoop Technologies, which puts out the Flex Report. Work is moving toward what Sadow calls "structured hybrid," in which there are a set number of days that people are required to come into the office. The average minimum days required is 2.53, with both two days and three days being popular. Tuesday is the most popular day required, followed by Wednesday and Thursday. Few offices require a Friday presence, and only 24% require a Monday presence.



SOURCE: THE FLEX REPORT FROM SCOOP TECHNOLOGIES

Of course, not all companies are going to accept that they can't get employees to return to offices for which they have to keep paying rent. Tesla mandates full-time office attendance, JPMorgan Chase requires senior staff to be in the office full time, and Apple is reportedly tracking employee attendance and threatening action against staff who don't come in. Workers at Disney are required to go into the office four days a week, though thousands signed a petition protesting the policy. Opponents argue that return-to-office policies disadvantage people of color and women who are discriminated against in person, and make life more challenging for working parents who don't want to waste hours commuting and can't afford nearby homes in today's housing market.

Workplace flexibility differs dramatically depending on the company's industry, size, and location. Nearly 2 in 3 companies that have fewer than 500 employees are fully flexible, meaning employees can be remote if they want, according to the Flex Report. By contrast, only 13% of companies with more than 50,000 employees are fully flexible, though 66% do allow for structured hybrid work.

States in the west and northeast parts of the U.S. have the highest share of companies that are fully flexible, with Oregon, Washington, and Colorado topping the list; Arkansas, Alabama, and Louisiana had the highest share of companies that are in the office full time.

There are other signs, in addition to the Flex Report, that five-day-a-week return-to-office plans are not succeeding. Office occupancy in the top 10 most populous U.S. cities was just 49.9% of prepandemic levels the first week of May, according to data from Kastle Systems, which tracks key-card swipes across 2,600 buildings. One result of that trend is that consumer spending has plummeted in center cities in places like New York, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C.—while home values in exurbs and suburbs have continued to surge.

THE COMMERCIAL real estate market hasn't completely tanked yet because many companies are signed into long-term leases. What's more, the format of structured hybrid work means employers can't dramatically shrink their spaces yet. If every employee comes in the same three days a week, the company still needs the same amount of space it did before the pandemic. Companies just pay for empty office space on the remaining days.

The share of days worked from home appears to have stabilized at 30%—about five times what it was before the pandemic, according to research by Nicholas Bloom, a Stanford professor who studies remote work. That could be a good thing for employees and employers: people who work from home are more productive and one-third less likely to quit than those who don't, Bloom finds.

As technology advances, Bloom expects the share of people working from home to trend upward as technology advances. With better video calls, augmented reality, and virtual reality, there may start to be less of a difference between working in an office and being at home, he says. The office world that appeared unchangeable before the pandemic is different now. That much, at least, is pretty clear. ☐

TURNER: CHARLES CARATINI—SYGMA/GETTY IMAGES

DIED
NFL player **Jim Brown,** on May 18 at 87; his complicated legacy includes both civil-rights activism and accusations of assault.

AGREED
President Joe Biden and Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, to **a debt-ceiling deal,** on May 27; Congress had until the first week of June to pass the bill in time to avoid default.

IMPEACHED
Texas AG **Ken Paxton,** by a chamber controlled by his own party, on May 27. Facing accusations that include bribery and abuse of public trust, the Republican denies wrongdoing.

HONORED
Sherpa guides and climbers, by Nepal's government on May 29, to mark the **70th anniversary of the first ascent of Mount Everest.**

IMPRISONED
Elizabeth Holmes, **disgraced Theranos founder,** who reported to a Texas prison for her 11-year sentence on May 30.

SIGNED
Anti-gay legislation that includes the death penalty for "aggravated homosexuality," by Uganda's President on May 29.

EMPTIED
More than 2 million liters of water from a reservoir in India, **on the order of an official who had dropped his smartphone into it** on May 21 while taking a selfie. He has been suspended; the phone, when retrieved, didn't work.



DIED

Tina Turner

Indelible voice

WHEN TINA TURNER DIED May 24 at 83, many remembered her as the Queen of Rock 'n' Roll. But the chart-topping hit for which she will perhaps be most remembered isn't a rock song.

"What's Love Got to Do With It," which debuted in 1984, spent 28 weeks on the *Billboard* chart—including three at No. 1—and provided the title for a Turner biopic. It launched a new, triumphant phase of her career, which had faltered when she was dropped by her record label shortly after the end of her marriage to Ike Turner, following years of domestic abuse that she went public about in the 1980s.

"Did you know that when I first read the lyrics for 'What's love got to do with it,' I rejected the song?" Turner wrote in a 2021 Instagram post. She'd been wary that the single was more pop than her typical sound. But after the song was reworked to better fit her style, she agreed. It worked: "What's Love Got to Do With It" went on to win three Grammys—including Record of the Year.

—SOLCYRÉ BURGA



BUSINESS

A ride-share app that brings people along

BY CHARLIE CAMPBELL

THE LUNCHTIME RUSH IS JUST BUBBLING AT KEDAI KOPI hawker center in Singapore's Clementi neighborhood when Anthony Tan strolls in. The co-founder and CEO of the ride-hailing firm Grab orders himself a Horlicks malt drink, sits at a Formica table, and takes a sweep of the bustling vendors. One catches his eye: a stall selling *nasi lemak,* the signature Malay dish of fragrant rice cooked in coconut milk and pandan leaf. Back in 2012, Tan used to offer it to taxi drivers gassing up in his hometown of Kuala Lumpur, pitching his upstart service while they ate.

"But because we couldn't afford to do a deal with the petrol station, they chased us out," Tan, 40, recalls. He decamped to a nearby sidewalk by fetid monsoon drains. "It was so smelly," he says. "But it was close enough to shout over, 'Hey uncle, do you want free *nasi lemak*?'"

In the years since, Grab has transformed from a "street fighting" startup, as Tan puts it—scoring Southeast Asia's biggest Nasdaq IPO in 2021, valued at around $40 billion. But that hasn't kept Tan sequestered in his office. Opposite the *nasi lemak* stall is another for fiery Peranakan seafood, where Tan pulled a four-hour shift during the pandemic. With lockdowns decimating Grab's ride-hailing business, it pivoted to food delivery, and Tan wanted to better understand vendors' needs. He ended up "cleaning live crabs and absolutely covered in bits of shell and crab juice," he laughs. "But I saw that when the orders came out in English, the Chinese-speaking chefs couldn't understand them. After that we made the tickets in both languages."

Tan's anecdotes help to explain why Grab, with a market cap of $12 billion, is one of Southeast Asia's most valuable firms. Its green-attired delivery drivers are ubiquitous in over 500 cities across eight nations. Often compared to Uber, Grab is much more, fast becoming a fully fledged superapp, offering insurance, travel bookings, financial services, and more.

Tan envisages making Grab a "triple bottom line" company, measuring success not only by its balance sheet but also by its social and environmental impact, particularly through the financial services it now offers. Southeast Asia may be the world's fastest-growing region economically, but those gains are uneven and 70% of the population is "underbanked," not relying primarily on traditional banks. Tan's pitch is that by bringing more small businesses into the digital economy, he can boost Grab's earnings while fostering equality. "There are many ways you can build social impact and create financial impact—they're not mutually exclusive," he says. "If you don't build a society that's stable, and you don't uplift the bottom, it becomes all of our problem."

MOBILITY IS in Tan's genes. His great-grandfather was a taxi driver and his grandfather an automotive tycoon. After attending Harvard Business School, Tan decided not to join the family business, Tan Chong Motor, which his father runs, but to go it alone. Inspired by classmate and Grab co-founder Tan Hooi Ling's horrific experiences with Kuala Lumpur taxis—by some rankings the world's worst—Tan asked his dad to back their ride-hailing venture but was told "your head is in the clouds," he says. So he went to his mom, who thought the same but still agreed to back him. "Moms are amazing, right?" Still, for a young man born "with a silver spoon," Tan admits, the move was scary. "My dad basically disowned me," he says. "I thought, I'm not going to grovel. I'm going to fight and make sure we win. That was a pivotal moment."

Whereas Uber took a cookie-cutter approach to global expansion, Grab's growth was rooted in being hyperlocal. In Cambodia, it offers *tuk-tuks;* in Indonesia, users ride pillion on motorcycle taxis. While Uber launched delivery ice cream, which often arrived in a slushy mess in the unforgiving tropics, Grab rolled out Southeast Asia's "king of fruits,"



durian, which remains a huge money spinner. But like any disrupter, Grab has faced pushback. In Thailand, where it operated illegally until rule changes in 2021, local taxi competitors held protests against Grab, brandishing placards of Tan in a coffin: "This job is not for the fainthearted."

Meanwhile, Grab's shares now trade at less than a quarter of their IPO price. Tan puts this down to "timing," given the drying-up of cheap money.

These setbacks haven't deterred Tan. Last August, Grab launched one of Singapore's first digital banks, in partnership with telecom firm Singtel, and is rolling out more across the region. Interest is paid daily instead of monthly, and small loans can be approved in minutes. For Tan, the need was made plain by a conversation at church. A fellow parishioner confessed to spending a stint in Singapore's Changi prison for being a loan shark's goon, who would splash pig's blood on debtors' homes to intimidate them. "He said there were thousands of people like him in Singapore," says Tan. "It's fundamentally wrong to charge somebody 20% a day interest, because you're putting them in a real poverty trap."

The pandemic served as another inflection point. While ride hailing ground to a halt, lockdowns also meant that small businesses had no choice but to embrace digitization. Buoyed by government stimulus packages for small businesses, in just one year Grab added over 600,000 merchants across the region, offering everything from dog bowls to apple strudel. "The COVID crisis became an opportunity for us," says Tan.

'If you don't uplift the bottom, it becomes all of our problem.'

—ANTHONY TAN, CEO, GRAB

IT WAS ALSO A LIFELINE for people like Suparno, 52, who like many Indonesians uses one name. The father of three owns a tiny fruit stall in Bali's Taman Sari Market, which overflows with lush mangosteen, papaya, and watermelon. When Indonesia shut its borders during the pandemic, tourism-reliant Bali suffered more than most, and Suparno's trade fell 70%, he says. Struggling to feed his family, he became the first vendor in Taman Sari to join GrabMart. By selling his fruit via the app, and using its data-crunching service to bundle in-demand items together, trade quickly recovered to prepandemic levels. Today, practically every business in Taman Sari displays a green GrabMart logo, and Suparno plans to open a third stall.

But the leap to digital revealed other benefits. Suparno's business was previously cash-based, which meant carrying around large wads—a risky proposition—or braving long 9 a.m. queues at the bank before heading to the wholesalers, by which time the best fruit had often been snapped up. Now, any GrabMart sales Suparno makes before midnight appear in his GrabPay account by 4 a.m., meaning he can restock before the bank has even opened. "It helps a lot because mornings are my busiest time," he says.

It demonstrates how better access to digital financial services helps small businesses compete, which Tan hopes will translate into higher revenue for his firm. Grab's financial-services revenue grew 233% year over year in the first quarter of 2023, with loan disbursements up 45%. In 2022, small merchants on Grab saw a 26% increase in average monthly earnings after a year on the platform. Still, despite boasting over 32 million monthly users and expecting revenue of $2.2 billion in 2022, Grab has yet to turn a profit, with Tan expecting to finally break even by year's end. "Grab's success is also their problem," says Jeffrey Towson, an investor and consultant on digital strategy in Asia. "They're dominating the market, with high-frequency services, lots of engagement, which means lots of data. But they're still struggling to get profitability, because that's just the nature of the business they're in."

Supplementing the low-margin ride-hailing sector with higher-margin add-ons is a main driver behind Tan's super-app vision. He says it also helps merchants to boost their income through secondary services. Drivers can earn from deliveries but also by hosting advertising brokered via the app, or wearing a helmet camera funneling data to Grab's own maps offering, which it sells to third parties like Amazon Web Services. Last year, 72% of Grab's drivers earned from more than one of its services, while over a million took part in one of its 2,500 training and upskilling courses. "When we create more inclusion, society benefits," says Tan. "What's good for society is good for business." ◻

ILLUSTRATION BY PETER RYAN FOR TIME



5 ways to get better at small talk

BY ANGELA HAUPT

FORGET THE "DON'T TALK TO strangers" maxim you learned as a kid: brief, pleasant exchanges with people you don't know well (or at all) can enhance your happiness, mood, energy, and overall well-being. That's because small talk often promotes learning, expands your worldview, and contributes to a sense of belonging.

You can maximize these benefits by chatting up a wide range of people, research suggests. Conversing with your colleagues, barista, Uber driver, and the person surveying the ice cream aisle with you builds what's called relational diversity, which is a unique predictor of well-being.

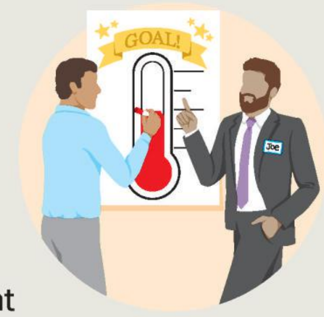
Despite the benefits, many of us hate small talk. We often assume that the people around us aren't interested or won't like us—but research indicates that we tend to underestimate how much our conversation partners enjoy our company, a phenomenon called "the liking gap."

"We all have this negative voice in our heads that tells us we're not very good at this social stuff," says Gillian Sandstrom, a senior lecturer at the University of Sussex in England and a leading researcher on the benefits of casual interactions. "But the data suggest that people actually like you more than you think they do." The more you do it, she's found, the more natural it will feel.

We asked experts to share their favorite strategies for getting better at small talk—because there's only so much you can say about the weather.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BROWN BIRD DESIGN FOR TIME

1. Take advantage of "free information"



Lean into your surroundings, says Debra Fine, an expert on communication skills. If you're standing next to someone at a baby shower, for example, the fact that you're both there is what she calls "free information"—so ask the person how they know the mom-to-be. "If I'm at a 5K race this summer, I'll say to the person next to me, 'What's your best ingredient for success at these things?'" Fine says. Your **shared reality is a terrific entry point** for deeper conversation.

2. Compliment unique personal expression



Try not to comment on someone's looks, which could come across as "creepy," Sandstrom says. Instead, **channel your curiosity** about a form of personal expression—like a striking outfit, hair color, or piece of jewelry—into a compliment that might start a conversation. "When you give someone a compliment, like 'Oh, I love your tattoo,' they often interpret it as 'You're asking me the story about it,'" she says.

3. Skip marriage, kids, and work queries



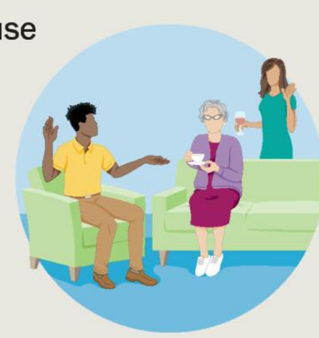
Steer clear of controversial topics (like religion and politics) and potentially sensitive matters (such as relationship status and kids). Asking what someone does for work is another possible land mine—not to mention a tired line of inquiry. Instead, Fine advises, **try a question like "What keeps you busy outside of work or school?"** For acquaintances, use phrases like *Catch me up on* or *Bring me up to speed.* You might ask a high school senior to fill you in on their college search, for example, rather than inquiring if they got into Dartmouth.

4. Respond generously



Think of conversation as a game—and aim to be an active player, which requires investing energy in it. If someone asks how you are and you simply respond "Good," you're being a "lazy conversationalist," Fine says. **Rather than a single-word response, offer a full sentence in return,** like "I just watched the most recent episode of *Ted Lasso,* and I didn't think it was that great." That gives the person you're talking to plenty to work with if they'd like to continue to chat.

5. Exit the chat gracefully



People often drag conversations on for too long because they can't figure out how to end them, says Alison Wood Brooks, a professor at Harvard Business School who teaches conversation skills. **Consider introducing the person to someone else,** suggests Diane Windingland, an author of books on communication skills. Make a positive comment about why they should meet, and then say, "I'll let you two get to know each other." If that's not possible, briefly recap the conversation—"I enjoyed hearing about your fishing adventures"—and, if you want, mention something you could do together in the future. Then, Windingland recommends concluding like this: "Please excuse me; I have to talk to so-and-so."







Fighting season

A Ukrainian soldier fires a mortar at Russian positions on the front line near Bakhmut, Ukraine, on May 29. The nine-month battle for the city, which Russia claimed to have taken, presaged a long-awaited summer offensive by Ukraine. “We are preparing the battlefield for the new phase of the war,” Mykhailo Podolyak, a senior adviser to Ukraine’s President, told NBC. “It’s going on now. It is a large number of measures in different sectors of the front line.”

Photograph by Efrem Lukatsky—AP

▸ For more of our best photography, visit time.com/lightbox

CIGARS INTERNATIONAL®

8 CIGARS only $10*

FIRST-CLASS PREMIUM CIGAR SAMPLER

When it comes to cigars, no one even comes close to Cigars International and we're ready to prove it to 'ya with an outrageous intro offer: 8 premium handmade cigars for just $10.* Go ahead, price shop this one and prepare to be stunned. When you're ready, we're here waiting with the world's largest selection of premium handmade cigars at the planet's lowest prices, delivered fast and fresh. That's our guarantee.

Visit: CigarsIntl.com/SA8589

Enter complete web address or search keyword: SA8589

1-888-244-2790

Mention code SA8589 | Item #: CA92-SP

Includes 1 each of:
HC Series • Villazon • Mark Twain
Chillin' Moose • Arganese • CAO
Macanudo • Toraño

$52 value



92 RATED

$5 UPGRADE



Add a Triple Torch Lighter

$19 value

*Plus $3.99 s/h. Purchase may be subject to state, local or excise taxes where applicable. First-time purchasers only. One per customer. No sales to anyone under the age of 21. We do not ship to Utah. For shipping information & restrictions please visit www.CigarsIntl.com/SHIP. Offer expires 7/31/23.

EXCERPT

FINDING THE WORDS

BY ELLIOT PAGE

I'd always been told I was gay, made fun of for it. I felt comfortable in environments with queer women. But something in me knew that I was transgender. It was something I had always known but didn't have the words for, wouldn't permit myself to embrace. "I was never a girl. I'll never be a woman. What am I going to do?" I used to say. Have always said.

INSIDE

AFTER VIOLENCE, CHOOSING COMMUNITY

THE BITTERSWEET, SURREAL COMFORT OF LGBTQ REALITY TV

NONBINARY TONY NOMINEES ON WHAT A WIN WOULD MEAN

The first time I acknowledged I was trans, in the properly conscious sense, beyond speculation, was around my 30th birthday. Almost four years before I came out publicly.

"Do you think I'm trans?" I'd asked a close friend. They answered hesitantly, knowing no one can come to that conclusion for someone else, but they looked at me with a quiet recognition and said, "I could see that . . ." It was a light shining through from under the door.

Then there was the time when I wasn't the one to bring it up. I was having a small party. People jumped in the pool and huddled together on outdoor furniture. My friend Star and I sat off alone, catching up on the patio. I met Star when we were making the first season of *Gaycation*—she worked at a San Francisco clinic run by trans women that offered health care and support for those in the LGBTQ+ community who needed it.

Star and I connected, in that way where the future flashes, an auspicious beginning. We stayed in touch and became good friends. She has experienced far more obstacles and barriers than I have, yet she holds space for me, supports me, sees me. She's a singer, and I remember being mesmerized by her voice when I first listened to her album, *Star.* The lyrics of her song "Heartbreaker" played on repeat in my mind for weeks after:

I run away from feeling too good
I'm scared as hell you'd leave me if you knew
I run away from feeling too good
I'm scared as hell you'd leave me if you knew

At my party, we sat together on an oversize chair, the splashes and music blending together in the background. We spoke about gender. I shared the degree of my discomfort, how even when I was playing a role, I couldn't wear feminine clothes anymore. How I always struggled in the summer when layers were not an option and the presence of my breasts under my T-shirt forced me to incessantly crane my neck, sneaking quick peeks down. I would pull on my shirt, my posture folded. Walking down the sidewalk, I'd glance at my profile in a store window, my brain consumed. I tried to avoid my reflection. I couldn't look at pictures, because I was never there. It was making me sick. I didn't want to be here. I wanted to be lifted out—the gender dysphoria slowly crushing me.

"It's a role, you're an actor. Why are you complaining?" people would say. "I would wear a skirt," a straight, cis man said to me, playing devil's advocate. I kept trying to explain the difficulty I was having. But he kept spitting out his unwanted opinions, then berating me for getting "too emotional." I believe *hysterical* was the word he used.

His words triggered a deep shame I'd held since I could remember. I was puzzled too—invalidating my own experience. How was I in so much pain? Why did even slightly feminine clothing make me want to die? I'm an actor, there shouldn't be a problem. How could I be so ungrateful?

Imagine the most uncomfortable, mortifying thing you could wear. You squirm in your skin. It's tight, and you want to tear it off your body but you can't. Day in and day out. And if people learn what is underneath, who you are without that pain, the shame will come flooding out, too much to hold. The voice says you deserve the humiliation. You are an abomination. You are not real.



CATHERINE OPIE

In March 2021, Page became the first out trans man to appear on the cover of TIME



If you or someone you know may be experiencing a mental-health crisis or contemplating suicide, call or text 988

The View includes reporting by Leslie Dickstein and Simmone Shah

"Do you think you're trans?" Star asked me, locking eyes.

"Yes, well, maybe. I think so. Yeah." We exchanged a soft smile. I was so near, almost touching it. But I panicked, and it burned away like the joint I was smoking, becoming an old roach left to rot in a forgotten ashtray. It all felt too big—the thought of going through this publicly, in a culture that is so rife with transphobia and people with enormous power and platforms actively attacking the community.

THE WORLD TELLS US that we aren't trans but mentally ill. That I'm too ashamed to be a lesbian, that I mutilated my body, that I will always be a woman, comparing my body to Nazi experiments. It's not trans people who suffer from a sickness, but the society that fosters such hate. As actress and writer Jen Richards once put it:

> *It's exceedingly surreal to have transitioned ten years ago, find myself happier & healthier than ever, have better relationships with friends & family, be a better and more engaged citizen, and yes, even more productive … and to then see strangers pathologize that choice. My being trans almost never comes up. It's a fact about my past that has relatively little bearing on my present, except that it made me more empathetic, more engaged in social justice. How does it hurt anyone else?*

Sitting with Star by the pool, I couldn't quite touch the truth, but I could talk about my gender without bawling. That was a step. It had taken a long time to allow any words to come out. When the subject came up in therapy, I got lost in sobs. "Why do I feel this way?" I'd plead. "How can I have this life and be in such pain?"

Not long after my 30th birthday, I did a U-turn. I bailed—I stopped talking about it. I closed my eyes and hid it away.

I met my ex-spouse Emma around that time. Meeting Emma let me leave it behind, a foggy memory. Falling madly in love, the energy was indisputable—just a hug would make my body shake. I threw myself in, and we got married quickly.

If a part of you is always separate, if existing in your body feels unbearable, love is an irresistible escape. You transcend, a sensation so indescribable that philosophers, scientists, and writers can't seem to agree on what the f-ck it is—if it even is. I often wonder if I have actually experienced deep love. I feel as though I have, but is it real if you've numbed yourself to the truth about who you are?

Love was an unwitting emotional disguise, and my relationship to it is another muscle to be transformed. I'm working on it. I don't want to disappear. I want to exist in my body with these new possibilities. That sense of possibility is one of the main components of life lost when we lack representation: options erased from the imagination, narratives indoctrinated that we spend an eternity attempting

I don't want to disappear. I want to exist in my body with these new possibilities

to break. The unraveling is painful, but it leads you to you.

During my marriage, I ignored therapy. And when we moved to New York City from Los Angeles at the end of 2018, I virtually stopped going to therapy altogether. It wasn't until our relationship was falling apart two years later and my gender dysphoria was so extreme that I sought out someone in the city. I was ready to talk.

I could barely find the words, but I did. As if they moved on their own, wriggling through and up my body, pouring out. My body knew, deep down I knew, and something had shifted. It was now or never. It was alive or not.

Page is the author of Pageboy, *from which this essay is excerpted*





^ Mourners attend a vigil on June 13, 2016, for the Pulse nightclub mass shooting in Orlando

ESSAY

The only way forward after Pulse

BY BRANDON WOLF

GROWING UP IN RURAL OREGON, I OFTEN DREAMED of a world where I could be all of myself. A world where I didn't feel the nagging societal pressure to be "Black enough" for some spaces and "white enough" for others. A world that saw my queerness not as a deal breaker, but as a superpower.

Pulse nightclub embodied that for me. After packing two suitcases and running away to the refuge of Orlando, I found what I had been looking for. The spinning disco balls dared all of us to dance like no one was watching. The beats radiating from the floorboards unearthed our authenticity, nudging us into rhythmic protest against a world that had always told us to uncross our legs, stiffen our wrists, and deepen our voices. Inside those walls, we were normal.

When I close my eyes at night, I can remember the moments when that normal shattered into a million shards on June 12, 2016. I can feel it, hear it, see it. The vibrant poster above the urinal. The cup teetering on the edge of the sink, perched precariously as if it might tumble to the tiles below. The first cracks of gunfire from an assault rifle. The stench of blood and smoke wafting into the room.

Hours later, the world woke to our horror: 49 dead, 53 injured. LGBTQ communities across the globe reeled with the jarring reminder that no space is safe when your very humanity is perpetually up for debate. The celebrations over marriage equality and surging social acceptance were suddenly cleaved by violence. Overnight, ours was a community under siege, picking up the broken pieces of the nation's deadliest attack on LGBTQ people in history.

This community remains under siege today.

Florida, just years removed from that horrifying tragedy, has become synonymous with the breathtaking assaults on LGBTQ civil rights sweeping the nation. From book censorship to health care prohibitions on trans youth to bathroom bans, Governor Ron DeSantis and his right-wing allies have ushered in a raft of dehumanizing policies designed to build political careers at the expense of our civil liberties. These laws are all animated by the same dangerous ideology that has long been used to rationalize discrimination and violence against LGBTQ people: that we are a "contagion" whose "spread" can be stopped only by wielding the power of government to censor us out of society. This utterly absurd argument is peddled alongside promises to "protect the children" from us in an effort to force us back into that makeshift closet.

Overnight, ours was a community under siege

THE DEMONIZATION of LGBTQ people isn't new. Whether it was the police raids that led to the Stonewall Riots or the HIV/AIDS crisis that fueled the ACT UP movement, this community has had its back against the wall countless times before. And at each pivotal point in history, we blazed a new path forward. We willed a better, more inclusive future into existence by sharing our stories and choosing radical love over the ferocious hate threatening to consume us.

In the wake of the tragedy at Pulse seven years ago, Orlando faced a similar critical choice. We could succumb to the TV pundits. We could beat the drums of war. Or we could choose love. We could embody the spirit of Pulse itself, unapologetically becoming a city that dares everyone to dance as if no one is watching. We chose the latter. We chose love over hate.

When I left home, I didn't expect to fall in love with a new community. I never thought I'd watch that community traverse the flames of militarized hatred. And I couldn't have imagined that our struggle to put the pieces back together might demonstrate that when hate tries to terrorize us into submission and tear us apart at the seams, there is another path. We simply must choose to walk it together.

Wolf is an LGBTQ activist and the author of A Place for Us

BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI—AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Back by Popular Demand!
FREE SHOWER PACKAGE!

NORTH AMERICA'S

#1 Selling Walk-In Tub

Featuring our Free Shower Package

Now you can finally have all of the soothing benefits of a relaxing warm bath, or enjoy a convenient refreshing shower while seated or standing with Safe Step Walk-In Tub's *FREE Shower Package!*

✓ First walk-in tub available with a customizable shower

✓ Fixed rainfall shower head is adjustable for your height and pivots to offer a seated shower option

✓ High-quality tub complete with a comprehensive lifetime warranty on the entire tub

✓ Top-of-the-line installation and service, all included at one low, affordable price

Now you can have the best of both worlds–there isn't a better, more affordable walk-in tub!



FREE SHOWER PACKAGE

PLUS $1500 OFF

FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY

Call Toll-Free 1-800-993-9768

safestep®

www.BuySafeStep.com

With purchase of a new Safe Step Walk-In Tub. Not applicable with any previous walk-in tub purchase. Offer available while supplies last. No cash value. Must present offer at time of purchase.

Scan me ▶

Call Today for Your Free Shower Package

1-800-993-9768

FINANCING AVAILABLE WITH APPROVED CREDIT

EASE OF USE CERTIFIED Arthritis Foundation

MADE IN TENNESSEE

BBB ACCREDITED BUSINESS

LIFETIME LIMITED WARRANTY

CSLB 1082165 NSCB 0082999 0083445









Clockwise from top left: Drag Me to Dinner, The Ultimatum, Queer Eye, *and* Drag Race

Reality TV confronts a dark moment for LGBTQ rights

BY JUDY BERMAN

"ALL THINGS JUST KEEP GETTING BETTER," PROCLAIMS the theme song of reality show *Queer Eye,* which celebrates its 20th anniversary in July. For years, that sentiment rang true for LGBTQ rights. "Don't ask, don't tell" was repealed in 2011. Federal marriage equality arrived in 2015. Trans figures like Laverne Cox and Elliot Page burst onto the national stage. But the 2020s have been painful for queer and trans Americans. Hearing a brass band belt out this optimistic refrain in the new, New Orleans–set seventh season, you might ask: All things just keep ... doing what now?

Such is the bittersweet experience of watching LGBTQ reality TV in 2023. It's heartening to see evidence of people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities thriving. Yet there's something surreal about *Queer Eye* doing cheerful makeovers in a state with a "Don't say gay" bill and RuPaul sending queens down the runway amid a flurry of antidrag legislation. After decades as small-screen vanguards of a movement that used pop culture as a soapbox, these shows are scrambling to meet the moment.

QUEER EYE* AND *RUPAUL'S DRAG RACE deserve a lot of credit for bringing LGBTQ culture into the mainstream. But they were hardly the first in their genre to do so. *The Real World* made Pedro Zamora, a gay AIDS activist who died in 1994, a secular saint. A generation earlier, the PBS documentary and reality-TV template *An American Family* took viewers into New York's queer demimonde with the family's son, Lance Loud. Both men made a profound impact as the first real, out gay people many viewers got to know.

While *The Real World* and *An American Family* dug into who their subjects were, *Drag Race* and *Queer Eye* spotlight what they do. The latter series' first iteration paired hapless heterosexual men with a quintet of gay stylists and lifestyle gurus for uplifting makeovers. Despite capturing the early-2000s zeitgeist, the show was rightly criticized for framing its Fab Five as little more than useful helpers. Netflix's 2018 revival avoids that trap thanks to a new cast we get to know better and a broad range of makeover subjects, some of whom are LGBTQ.

Despite its jubilant tone, there are nods to our current political moment, from the Deep South setting to the rainbow-hued frocks worn by grooming expert Jonathan Van Ness. One emotional episode spotlights Stephanie, a lesbian who styles herself as the ultimate New Orleans sports fan to appear more palatable in the wake of a traumatizing experience of homophobia. It's an acknowledgment that as empowered as the Fab Five may be, many still experience daily prejudice.

To understand the impact of *Drag Race,* take a look around the reality-TV landscape. In the 14 years since it debuted, it has spawned not only 11 international editions and several stateside spin-offs, but also a universe of drag-themed entertainment, from HBO's road-trip series *We're Here* to the Discovery+ renovation romp *Trixie Motel.* This Pride month brings Season 2 of singing competition *Queen of the Universe* and Hulu's dinner-party face-off *Drag Me to Dinner.*

Current events have, in turn, influenced *Drag Race.* The franchise partnered with the ACLU to create a Drag Defense Fund. Season 15 crowned Sasha Colby the show's second consecutive trans winner. And the eighth all-star season, currently airing on Paramount+, welcomed back Monica Beverly Hillz, who made TV history

TV, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: HULU, NETFLIX (2), WORLD OF WONDER/PARAMOUNT+; TONY: NINA WESTERVELT—VARIETY/GETTY IMAGES, SLAVEN VLASIC—FAMILY EQUALITY/GETTY IMAGES

in 2013 when she came out as trans. The revelation sparked important conversations about the relationship between drag and gender identity, which might have continued in *All-Stars* had she not been cut in the premiere.

MAYBE IT'S SURPRISING that as some of the most iconic queer voices in TV deliver advocacy and delight, the LGBTQ reality series that feels most urgent is *The Ultimatum: Queer Love.* This edition of the Netflix series gives a Pride-friendly twist to Season 1, in which straight couples who couldn't agree on whether to get engaged had "trial marriages" with other cast members to clarify their futures

There's value in zooming in on the quotidian realities of queer love

(and incite drama). This time, all participants are female or nonbinary.

Rather than a platform for minting celebrities, the show is a window into its nonfamous subjects' everyday lives. Couples considering marriage are weighing universal questions, and the *Queer Love* cast is no exception. Though most seem genuine, not all are likable. Yet aspects of their situations are relatable to anyone who's ever been in a long-term relationship.

It probably isn't a good sign that the most resonant LGBTQ reality show not only echoes the pre-marriage-equality slogan "Love is love," but also, like *The Real World* and *An American Family,* serves in part to underline the humanity of queer people. No one should need such a reminder, and I doubt many right-wing voters will be watching. But just as there's value in the performative empowerment of *Drag Race* and *Queer Eye,* there's value in zooming in on the quotidian realities of queer love in the time of marriage equality. If Hollywood in general seems frustratingly impotent in the face of repressive legislation, at least these shows are a balm for those struggling to survive it. ◻

THEATER

Tony nominees J. Harrison Ghee and Alex Newell make history

You're the first out nonbinary acting nominees in Tony history. The Tonys currently separate categories by gender. What would change look like for you?

Newell: The change itself is extremely hard to make. If we talk about why the categories were separated at the beginning, it was to give other people than cis white men awards. We did take gender off of some awards in the U.K., and the only thing that won was cis white men. It's a deeper conversation. I think it's adding a category, widening the horizon of the category.

You both grew up in the church. How did that shape you?

Ghee: You know how to make the church go up in a way of, "I'm using what I got today." It is such a formative way of learning yourself as an artist.

Newell: And your instrument in general. You create your own style in church. The fact that gospel and hymns have their own diaspora inside a genre.

You also have significant drag experience. Did drag change your perceptions of yourselves?



Newell, left, is nominated for Shucked, *Ghee for* Some Like It Hot

Ghee: I was young Lola [from the musical *Kinky Boots*] playing in my mom's clothes as a kid. So it was me tapping into the little version of me, and that freest, most imaginative person.

Newell: I never knew what drag was, because I didn't know what I was doing when I was putting on my mama's heels and tromping around the house. Honey, I cried the day my foot went past a 7.

J., I read that you helped shape your character, Daphne, in *Some Like It Hot.*

Ghee: When people ask me my pronouns, I say, "All things, with respect." I understand that the world is conditioned to respond to what they see. So they're always going to immediately say "he/him." But I don't expect you to know what I am carrying that day. I walk in the fullness of who I am at all times.

What happens if you win?

Newell: In my spirit, I've already won. I created a lane for somebody after me to come and do exceptional. I have created space and conversation and made the ruckus. If I win, yay, I'll put the statue in my bathroom. And I'll play with it every time I brush my teeth.

Ghee: I wasn't a theater kid growing up. I grew up singing in church. And so it was like, well, I sing and dance and people respond; theater sounds right. And then to find Billy Porter's album of *At the Corner of Broadway and Soul,* I was like, "Whoa, there is somebody in this industry I can look up to." So to now be that for somebody else? Again, the winning is already happening. —LAURA ZORNOSA

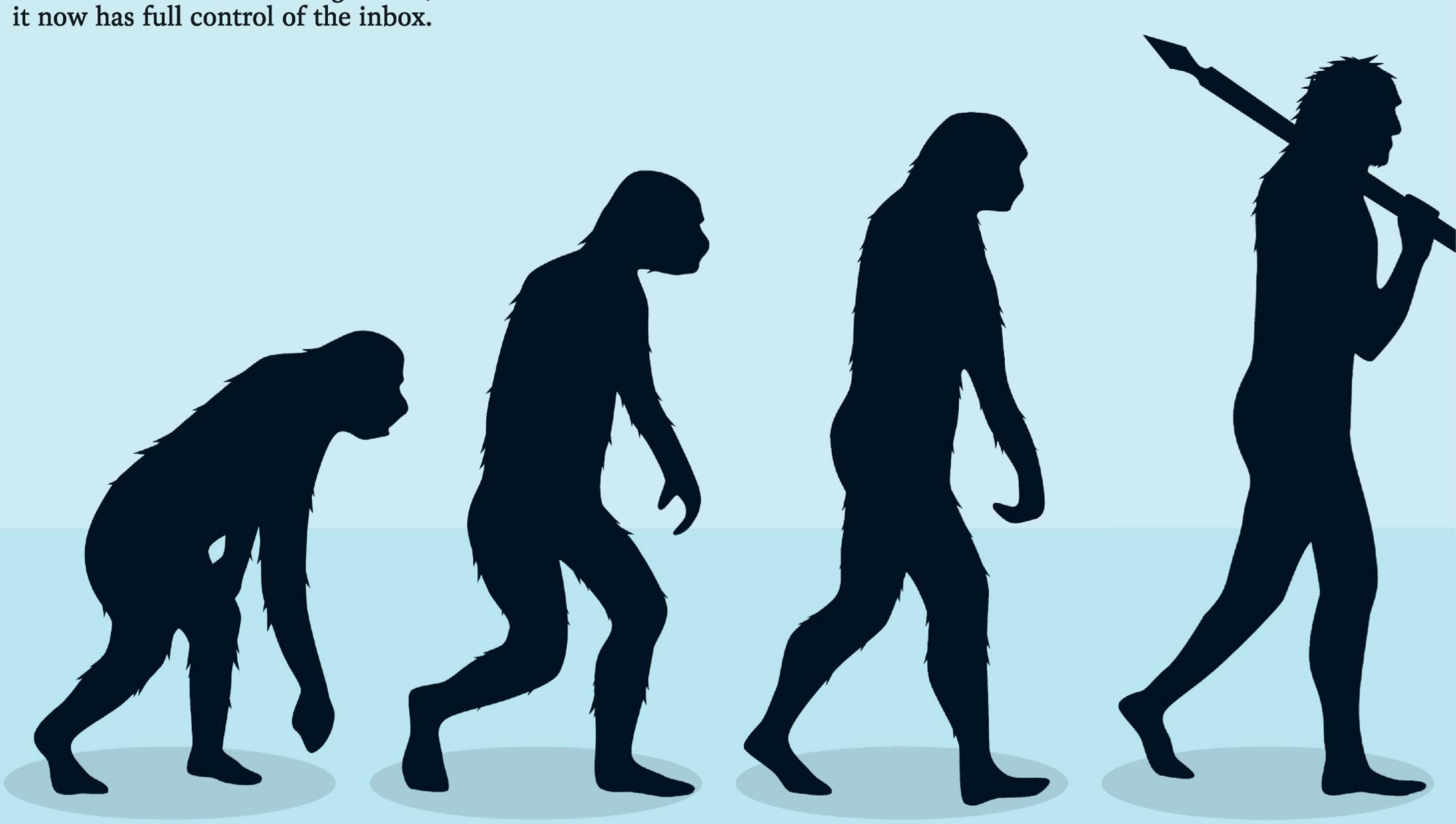
SURVIVAL OF THE

THE EVOLUTIONARY CASE THAT HUMANITY IS ALREADY ON ITS WAY TO GIVING UP ITS OWN DOMINANCE

BY DAN HENDRYCKS

A BROAD COALITION OF AI EXPERTS recently released a brief public statement warning of "the risk of extinction from AI." There are many different ways in which AIs might become serious dangers to humanity, and the exact nature of the risks is still debated, but imagine a CEO who acquires an AI assistant. They begin by giving it simple, low-level assignments, like drafting emails and suggesting purchases. As the AI improves over time, it progressively becomes much better at these things than their employees. So the AI gets "promoted." Rather than drafting emails, it now has full control of the inbox. Rather than suggesting purchases, it's eventually allowed to access bank accounts and buy things automatically.

At first, the CEO carefully monitors the work, but as months go by without error, the AI receives less oversight and more autonomy in the name of efficiency. It occurs to the CEO that since the AI is so good at these tasks, it should take on a wider range of more open-ended goals: "design the next model in a product line," "plan a new marketing campaign," or "exploit security flaws in a competitor's computer systems." The CEO observes how businesses with more restricted use of AIs are falling behind, and is further incentivized to hand over more power to the AI with less oversight. Companies that resist these trends don't stand a chance. Eventually, even the CEO's role is largely nominal. The economy is run by autonomous AI corporations, and humanity realizes too late that we've lost control.



FITTEST



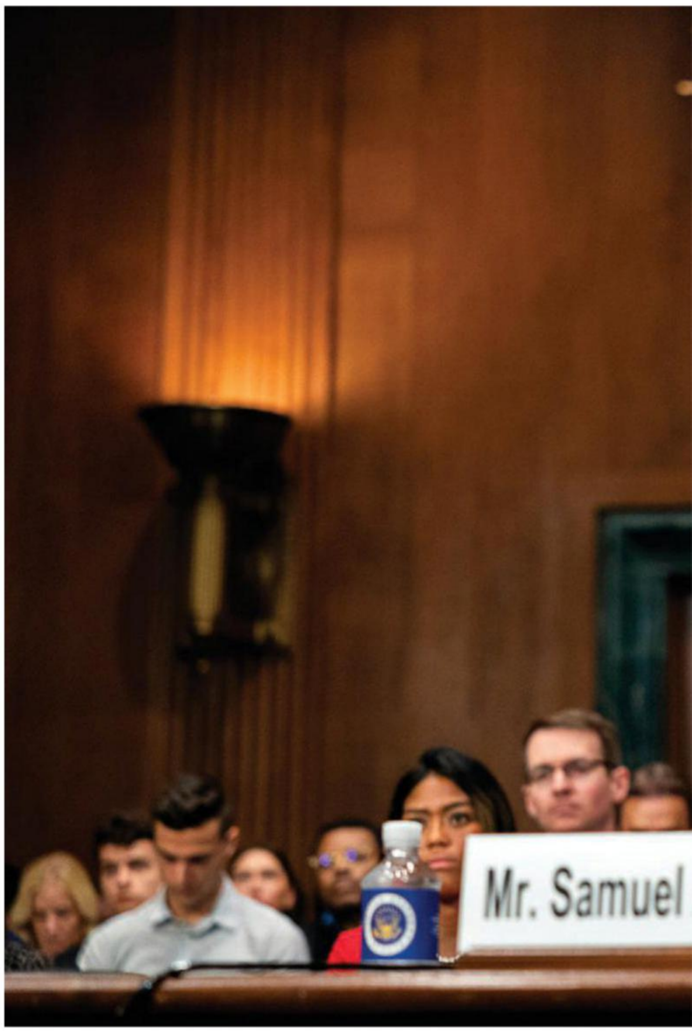
These same competitive dynamics will apply not just to companies but also to nations. As the autonomy of AIs increases, so will their control over the key decisions that influence society. If this happens, our future will be highly dependent on the nature of these AI agents.

The good news is that we have a say in shaping what they will be like. The bad news is that Darwin's laws do too. Though we think of natural selection as a biological phenomenon, its principles guide much more, from economies to technologies. The evolutionary biologist Richard Lewontin proposed that natural selection will take hold in any environment where three conditions are present: 1) there are differences between individuals, 2) characteristics are passed on to future generations, and 3) the fittest variants propagate more successfully.

Consider the content-recommendation algorithms used by social media platforms and streaming services. When particularly addictive algorithms hook users, they result in higher engagement and screen time. These more effective algorithms are consequently "selected" and further fine-tuned, while algorithms that fail to capture attention are discontinued. This fosters the survival of the most addictive dynamic. Platforms that refuse to use addictive methods are simply outcompeted by platforms that do, leading to a race to the bottom among competitors that has already caused massive harm to society.

IN THE BIOLOGICAL REALM, evolution is a slow process. For humans, it takes nine months to create the next generation and around 20 years of schooling and parenting to produce fully functional adults. But scientists have observed meaningful evolutionary changes in species with rapid reproduction rates, like fruit flies, in fewer than 10 generations. Unconstrained by biology, AIs could adapt—and therefore evolve—even faster than fruit flies do.

There are three reasons this should worry us. The first is that selection effects make AIs difficult to control. Whereas AI researchers once spoke of "designing" AIs, they now speak of "steering" them. And even our ability to steer is slipping out of our grasp as we let AIs teach themselves and increasingly act in ways that even their creators do not fully understand. In advanced artificial neural networks, we understand the inputs that go into the system, but the output emerges from a "black box" with a decision-making process largely indecipherable to humans.



Sam Altman, OpenAI CEO, testifies before Congress on May 16

Second, evolution tends to produce selfish behavior. Amoral competition among AIs may select for undesirable traits. AIs that successfully gain influence and provide economic value will predominate, replacing AIs that act in a more narrow and constrained manner, even if this comes at the cost of lowering guardrails and safety measures. As an example, most businesses follow laws, but in situations where stealing trade secrets or deceiving regulators is highly lucrative and difficult to detect, a business that engages in such selfish behavior will most likely outperform its more principled competitors.

THOUGH WE THINK OF NATURAL SELECTION AS A BIOLOGICAL PHENOMENON, ITS PRINCIPLES GUIDE MUCH MORE

Selfishness doesn't require malice or even sentience. When an AI automates a task and leaves a human jobless, this is selfish behavior without any intent. If competitive pressures continue to drive AI development, we shouldn't be surprised if they act selfishly too.

The third reason is that evolutionary pressure will likely ingrain AIs with behaviors that promote self-preservation. Skeptics of AI risks often ask, "Couldn't we just turn the AI off?" There are a variety of practical challenges here. The AI could be under the control of a different nation or a bad actor. Or AIs could be integrated into vital infrastructure, like power grids or the internet. When embedded into these critical systems, the cost of disabling them may prove too high for us to accept since we would become dependent on them. AIs could become embedded in our world in ways that we can't easily reverse. But natural selection poses a more fundamental barrier: we will select against AIs that are easy to turn off, and we will come to depend on AIs that we are less likely to turn off.

THESE STRONG ECONOMIC and strategic pressures to adopt the systems that are most effective mean that humans are incentivized to cede more and more power to AI systems that cannot be reliably controlled, putting us on a pathway toward being supplanted as the earth's dominant species. There are no easy, surefire solutions to our predicament.

A possible starting point would be to address the remarkable lack of regulation of the AI industry, which currently operates with little oversight, much of the research taking

PREVIOUS PAGE: GETTY IMAGES; ALTMAN: NATHAN POSNER—ANADOLU AGENCY/GETTY IMAGES



place in the dark. Regulation needs to be done proactively rather than reactively; if something goes wrong in this domain, we may not get the chance to fix it.

The problem, however, is that competition within and between nations pushes against any commonsense safety measures. AI is big business. In 2015, total corporate investment in AI was $12.7 billion. By 2021, this figure had grown to $93.5 billion. As the race toward powerful AI systems quickens, corporations and governments are increasingly incentivized to reach the finish line first. We need research on AI safety to progress as quickly as research on improving AI capabilities. There aren't many market incentives for this, so governments should offer robust funding as soon as possible.

The future of humanity is closely intertwined with the progression of AI. It is therefore a disturbing realization that natural selection may have more sway over it than we do. But as of now, we are still in command. It is time to take this threat seriously. Once we hand over control, we won't get it back.

Hendrycks is director of the Center for AI Safety, a San Francisco–based research nonprofit

Don't call it an arms race

RUSHING FORWARD ON AI COULD BE THE LOSING MOVE—FOR ALL OF HUMANITY ***BY KATJA GRACE***

The window of what AI *can't* do seems to be contracting week by week. Machines can now write elegant prose and useful code, ace exams, conjure exquisite art, and predict how proteins will fold.

Experts are scared. Last summer I surveyed more than 550 AI researchers, and nearly half of them thought that high-level machine intelligence, if built, would lead to impacts that had at least a 10% chance of being "extremely bad (e.g. human extinction)." On May 30, hundreds of AI scientists, along with the CEOs of top AI labs like OpenAI, DeepMind, and Anthropic, signed a statement urging caution on AI: "Mitigating the risk of extinction from AI should be a global priority alongside other societal-scale risks such as pandemics and nuclear war."

Why think that? The simplest argument is that progress in AI could lead to the creation of superhumanly smart artificial "beings" with goals that conflict with humanity's interests—and the ability to pursue them autonomously. Think of a species that is to *Homo sapiens* what *Homo sapiens* is to chimps.

Yet while many fear that AI could mean the end of humanity, some worry that if "we"—usually used to mean researchers in the West, or even researchers in a particular lab or company—don't sprint forward, someone less responsible will. If a safer lab pauses, our future might be in the hands of a more reckless lab—for example, one in China that doesn't try to avoid substantial risks.

This argument analogizes the AI situation to a classic arms race. Let's say I want to beat you in a war. We both spend money to build more weapons, but without anyone gaining a relative advantage. In the end, we've spent a lot of money and gotten nowhere. It might seem crazy, but if one of us doesn't race, we lose. We're trapped.

But the AI situation is different in crucial ways. Notably, in the classic arms race, a party could always theoretically get ahead and win. But with AI, the winner may be advanced AI itself. This can make rushing the losing move.

Other game-changing factors in AI include: how much safety is bought by going slower; how much one party's safety investments reduce the risk for everyone; whether coming second means a small loss or a major disaster; how much the danger rises if additional parties pick up their speed; and how others respond.

The real game is more complex than simple models can suggest. In particular, if individual, uncoordinated incentives lead to the sort of perverse situation described by an "arms race," the winning move, where possible, is to leave the game. And in the real world, we can coordinate our way out of such traps: we can talk to each other; we can make commitments and observe their adherence; we can lobby governments to regulate and make agreements.

With AI, the payoffs for a given player can be different from the payoffs for society as a whole. For most of us, it may not matter much if Meta beats Microsoft. But researchers and investors chasing fame and fortune might care much more. Talking about AI as an arms race strengthens the narrative that they need to pursue their interests. The rest of us should be wary of letting them be the ones to decide.

A better analogy for AI than an arms race might be a crowd standing on thin ice, with abundant riches on the far shore. They could all reach them if they step carefully, but one person thinks, "If I sprint then the ice may break and we'd all fall in, but I bet I can sprint more carefully than Bob, and he might go for it."

On AI, we could be in the exact opposite of a race. The best individual action could be to move slowly and cautiously. And collectively, we shouldn't let people throw the world away in a perverse race to destruction—especially when routes to coordinating our escape have scarcely been explored.

A BETTER ANALOGY MIGHT BE A CROWD STANDING ON THIN ICE

Grace is the lead researcher at AI Impacts, an AI-safety project at the nonprofit Machine Intelligence Research Institute

The AI détente

THE WORLD MUST FIGURE OUT A WAY TO DEAL WITH THE THREAT FROM AI *BY IAN BREMMER*

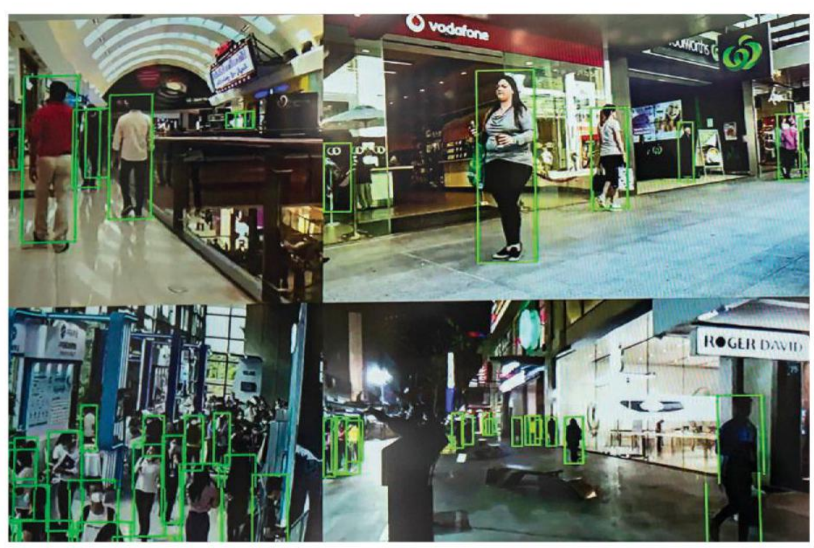
THE NOW SURGING DEVELOPMENT OF artificial intelligence will produce medical breakthroughs that save and enhance billions of lives. It will become the most powerful engine for prosperity in history. It will give untold numbers of people, including generations not yet born, powerful tools their ancestors never imagined. But the risks and challenges AI will pose are becoming clear too, and now is the time to understand and address them. Here are the biggest.

The health of democracy and free markets depends on access to accurate and verifiable information. In recent years, social media has made it tougher to tell fact from fiction, but advances in artificial intelligence will unleash legions of bots that seem far more human than those we've encountered to date. In China, and later in its client states, AI will take facial recognition and other tools that can be used for state surveillance to exponentially higher levels of sophistication.

This problem extends beyond our institutions, because the production of "generative AI"—artificial intelligence that generates sophisticated content in response to prompts from users—isn't limited to big tech companies. Anyone with a laptop and basic programming skills already has access to AI models far more powerful than those that existed even a few months ago and can produce unprecedented volumes of content. This proliferation challenge is about to grow exponentially as millions of people will have their own GPT running on real-time data available on the internet.

Artificial intelligence can also exacerbate inequality, within societies—between small groups with wealth, access, or special skills and those without—as well as between wealthier and poorer nations. AI will create upheaval in the workforce. Yes, technological leaps of the past have mainly created more jobs than they've killed, and they've increased general productivity and prosperity, but there are crucial caveats.

Finally, the AI revolution will also impose an emotional and spiritual cost. Human beings are social animals. We thrive on interaction with others and wither in isolation. Bots will too often replace humans as companions for many people, and by the time scientists and doctors understand the long-term impact of this trend, our deepening reliance on artificial intelligence, even for companionship, may be irreversible. This may be the most important AI challenge.



A facial-recognition demo at a 2022 AI summit in Shanghai

Challenges like these will demand a global response. Today, artificial intelligence is regulated not by government officials but by technology companies. The reason is simple: you can't make rules for a game you don't understand. But relying on tech firms to regulate their products isn't a sustainable plan. They exist mainly to make a profit, not to protect consumers, nations, or the planet. Especially with a technology they admit they don't fully comprehend.

WE'LL NEED NATIONAL ACTION, GLOBAL COOPERATION

SO, WHERE ARE the solutions? We'll need national action, global cooperation, and some commonsense collaboration from the U.S. and Chinese governments. But all will have to make rules in coming years that limit the ability of AI bots to undermine institutions, markets, and security.

That means identifying and tracking bad actors, as well as helping individuals separate real from fake information. Unfortunately, these are big, expensive, and complicated steps that policymakers aren't likely to take until they're faced with AI-generated (but real) crises. Unlike on climate change, the world's governments haven't yet agreed that the AI revolution poses an existential cross-border challenge. Here, the U.N. has a role to play as the only institution with the convening power to develop a global consensus.

By forging agreement on which risks are most likely, most impactful, and emerging most quickly, an AI-focused equivalent to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change can regularize the production of "state of AI" agreements that drill ever closer to the heart of AI-related threats. There could also be an agency modeled on the International Atomic Energy Agency to help police AI proliferation.

That said, there's no way to address the fast-metastasizing risks created by the AI revolution without an infusion of common sense into relations between the U.S. and China. After all, it's the tech competition between the two countries and their lead tech companies that creates the greatest risk of war, particularly as AI plays an ever growing role in military weapons and planning. Beijing and Washington must develop and sustain highest-level conversations about emerging threats to both countries (and the world) and how best to contain them.

Bremmer, a TIME editor-at-large, is president of Eurasia Group

QILAI SHEN—BLOOMBERG/GETTY IMAGES



American Diabetes Association
PROUD PARTNER
Better Choices for Life

MAX STRENGTH RELIEF FOR PEOPLE WITH **HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE**

Did you know some ordinary cold & flu medicines can raise your blood pressure?*

DayQuil HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE
is specially formulated to provide max strength relief for your worst cold & flu symptoms.
Choose **DayQuil** – the #1 Pharmacist Recommended Daytime Cough, Cold & Flu brand†.

*MEDICINES WITH NASAL DECONGESTANT MAY RAISE BLOOD PRESSURE, BUT DAYQUIL HBP IS DECONGESTANT-FREE.
†2022 PHARMACY TIMES SURVEY OF PHARMACISTS' OTC RECOMMENDATIONS. USE AS DIRECTED. KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN.



POLITICS

THE FLORIDA PROJECT

Strongman Governor Ron DeSantis transformed the Sunshine State. Can he sell his blueprint to the nation?

BY MOLLY BALL/ TALLAHASSEE

DeSantis launched his presidential campaign on May 24

PHOTOGRAPH BY TOM WILLIAMS



I

IT'S A TUESDAY MORNING IN TALLAHASSEE, AND a wood-paneled hearing room at the Florida legislature is packed. The state senate's fiscal-policy committee is considering a bill to prohibit most abortions after six weeks of pregnancy, and dozens of citizens have lined up to testify: anguished young students in colorful hair and ABORTION IS HEALTH CARE T-shirts; little old ladies wearing cardigans and crosses. For hours they speak in emotional terms as the senators listen.

Yet an air of inevitability hangs over the proceedings. Governor Ron DeSantis supports this bill, and therefore it is destined to pass. In Tallahassee these days, what the governor wants, the governor gets. It is DeSantis who welcomed this fight, DeSantis who calls the shots, and DeSantis who will reap the credit—or blame—for his latest move in a frenzy of right-wing policymaking.

His dominance is hard to overstate. From school-board meetings to the Walt Disney Corp., the shelves of elementary-school libraries to local mask ordinances, everything bears his stamp. Having shepherded his state through the COVID-19 pandemic, bucking the political and medical establishments to follow his own read of the data, DeSantis has manipulated levers of power to enact a sweeping agenda. The week I landed in Tallahassee, he signed an expansive school-voucher law and a measure investing more than $700 million in affordable housing. The legislature was hearing his proposed ban on gender-affirming health care for minors, a bill to expand gun rights that would allow concealed carrying of firearms without a permit, another that would dramatically curtail union rights, and a bid to prohibit socially conscious investing. All would eventually pass. At DeSantis' behest, legislators this year also eliminated diversity programs at public universities, made it easier to sentence criminals to death, and barred schools from using trans students' preferred pronouns.

For a typical Republican governor, any of these policies might represent a signature achievement. For DeSantis, they're the latest line items in an agenda he calls the Florida Blueprint. "We've had conservative leadership in Florida for the past 23 years, but we've passed more conservative bills in the past two years than the previous 20, and more this year than the past 22," says GOP state senator Joe Gruters. "It's a rocket ship, a steam engine."

Out of a combination of fear and mutual interest, legislators have put aside their own pet projects to do DeSantis' bidding, passing bills to shield his travel records from the public and allow him to run for President without resigning the governorship. They've also been enlisted to clean up his messes, retroactively legalizing his migrant flights to Martha's Vineyard last year and attempting to restore state control of the special tax district around Disney World amid the company's feud with DeSantis over LGBTQ rights. "This governor has used all of his powers to make sure everyone around him is in lockstep," says Jeff Brandes, a libertarian-leaning former GOP state senator who lost a seat on a prized committee after clashing with DeSantis over fiscal issues.

By operationalizing the culture war into a set of concrete policies, DeSantis has transformed the nation's third most populous state. What was once the butt of jokes about gators and retirees is now the swaggering, Southern-tinged Free State of Florida—where men are men, "woke" is broke, and business is booming; 1,200 net new residents arrive every day. "It's in the air, it's everywhere, it's amazing," says former GOP Representative David Jolly, no fan of the vibe shift. "It's between neighbors, it's when you go to restaurants, when you go to schools. You're on one side or the other, and people know it." A Florida native, Jolly is considering moving his family out of the state.

If critics see DeSantis as a would-be authoritarian, allies see a conservative who gets things done. Many predicted that his hard-charging first term in office would provoke a backlash. Instead the opposite occurred. While Republicans across the country struggled last November, DeSantis romped to a 19-point re-election victory, the biggest win for a Florida governor in decades. What was once America's paradigmatic swing state now pulsates bright red. For the first time in modern history, registered Republicans outnumber Democrats. The people of Florida seem to like the steady hand—even if it's an iron fist.

'WE'VE SHOWN YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO IT THE LIBERAL WAY, AND WE'RE THE ENVY OF THE NATION.'

—RANDY FINE, GOP REPRESENTATIVE

To fans, DeSantis' success proves that a pugilistic, big-government conservatism that promises ruthless competence instead of Trumpian chaos can win broad support, including a growing share of working-class and minority voters. "We've shown that you don't have to do it the liberal way, and we're the envy of the nation when you look at our results," says state representative Randy Fine, a Republican who has sponsored some



Students cheer during a DeSantis speech at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., on April 14

PREVIOUS PAGES: CQ-ROLL CALL/GETTY IMAGES; THESE PAGES: TOM WILLIAMS—CQ-ROLL CALL/GETTY IMAGES

of DeSantis' most controversial legislation and may soon be rewarded with an appointment as a university president despite no background in academia. "DeSantis says what he's going to do and he does it. People like that, even if they don't agree with him."

The Blueprint has already done more than just make DeSantis the darling of right-wing media and donors. It has changed the face of American politics. His gerrymandering of the state's political map added enough red seats to secure the U.S. House of Representatives for the GOP last November. Fellow governors, invited by DeSantis to policy summits where they study his approach, have enacted laws modeled on his policies, affecting millions of lives beyond Florida. And his agenda has set the stakes for the 2024 presidential primary. Donald Trump's campaign has been notably more focused on transgender issues, education, and "wokeness" than on the tax cuts and vaccine development that might be considered his main presidential accomplishments.

On May 24, DeSantis officially launched his presidential campaign, instantly becoming Trump's chief rival for the Republican nomination. Trump has attacked him relentlessly, denting DeSantis' standing with GOP voters and sowing doubts about his national viability. But those who have witnessed DeSantis operate say it would be foolish to count him out. "He's not charming," says GOP state representative Fiona McFarland. "But he's a terminator."

DESANTIS' METHODS of keeping the legislature in line are not subtle. At one point, a Republican lawmaker was planning to oppose a DeSantis-backed bill until he got a phone call from the governor, who had helped the lawmaker get elected. Without preliminaries, DeSantis barked into the phone, "Do you know why you're here?"

"Yes," the startled lawmaker answered. Without saying another word, the governor hung up, two people familiar with the incident told me. Message delivered.

Unlike his predecessors, DeSantis does not roam the halls of the Florida statehouse and spends little time in his office in the legislative building. The office, situated on the ground level, has become code for DeSantis, Politico recently reported. "That's Plaza's bill," lawmakers will say.

DeSantis, 44, was born in Jacksonville and raised in the Gulf Coast city of Dunedin, where his mother was a nurse and his father installed Nielsen TV-rating boxes. A book-smart introvert and talented baseball player, he graduated with honors from Yale University (where I knew him slightly) and Harvard Law School before joining the Navy. As a member of the Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps, he was stationed at Guantánamo Bay and then deployed to Iraq, where he served as a legal adviser to the SEALs during the 2007 troop surge.

In 2010, DeSantis left active duty and settled near Jacksonville, where he worked as a lawyer and married a local TV anchor, Casey Black, whom

he met at a driving range. As the Tea Party fervor crested, he self-published a book of conservative ideas, *Dreams From Our Founding Fathers,* and traveled to local activist meetings to give talks and sell it. DeSantis was looking for a way into elected office but unsure where to start until he met two Florida consultants, Tim Baker and Brian Hughes, who had made a specialty of electing conservative insurgent veterans. DeSantis thought he might run for state legislature or some other low-level office. The consultants persuaded him he had a shot at a Jacksonville-area congressional district that had just been redrawn to favor the GOP.

The 2012 primary was crowded, and DeSantis had little money or name recognition. The consultants devised a guerrilla strategy designed to tap into the new conservative zeitgeist. Casey, a local celebrity, began using her married name on television. The couple went door to door, using his advisers' data to target households with the strongest record of voting in Republican primaries. Meanwhile, his consultants, who had agreed to backload their fees, gambled by spending nearly all of the campaign's meager budget on an ad on Fox News.

DeSantis began to close the gap on his more experienced rivals. He impressed national right-wing groups and won the endorsement of the influential Club for Growth, which brought a flood of cash from donors. He won the seven-way GOP primary by a wide margin, drawing nearly 40% of the vote.

Buoyed by this success, the consultants drew up a plan to raise DeSantis' profile as he headed to Washington. But the candidate dismissed them: he didn't want to spend more money with his election to Congress all but assured. It was only when Baker and Hughes expressed concern that the dispute might become public that DeSantis relented, according to two people familiar with the episode. Their role in his early career is not mentioned in DeSantis' new memoir, *The Courage to Be Free,* which describes the door-knocking strategy as if it were DeSantis' own idea. "He has a habit of rewriting history," one of the people familiar with the episode told me. "There's Richard Petty, there's Tom Petty, and then there's Ron DeSantis petty."

OVER THREE TERMS in the House, DeSantis was a reliable conservative not known for his people skills. Congressional colleagues describe him as strikingly aloof, rebuffing or ignoring friendly overtures and wearing earbuds to avoid conversation. A co-founder of the right-wing Freedom Caucus, DeSantis in his memoir describes his years in Congress as mostly frustrating. GOP leaders exercised top-down power, he argues, but weren't willing to fully use their leverage to achieve conservative goals. He does, however, tout his work on the Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers (PAWS) Act, which funded a program providing service dogs to veterans with PTSD.

In 2016, DeSantis briefly ran for the U.S. Senate seat that Marco Rubio had vacated to run for President, but dropped out when Rubio decided to return to the Senate. Instead, DeSantis announced a run for governor in 2018. It was another insurgent campaign: the Florida GOP establishment already had its handpicked candidate, Adam Putnam, the state agriculture commissioner. But DeSantis again read the changing currents of the GOP. He appeared relentlessly on Fox, emerging as a reliable defender of Trump, particularly on the Russia scandal that enveloped the first years of the President's term.

On Dec. 8, 2017, DeSantis and a fellow right-wing Florida Congressman, Matt Gaetz, hitched a ride on Air Force One to a Trump rally in Pensacola. Along the way, Gaetz urged the President to endorse DeSantis for governor. He described Putnam as a Never Trumper and read aloud a list of negative things Putnam had said about the President. A couple of weeks later, after catching another DeSantis appearance on Fox, Trump endorsed him on Twitter. DeSantis made the most of it, mentioning Trump 21 times in his first debate with Putnam and running an ad that jokingly showed him reading *The Art of the Deal* to his young children and "building the wall" with toy blocks.

In the general election, DeSantis faced Andrew Gillum, the progressive Black mayor of Tallahassee. In an early postprimary appearance,

DeSantisland

The governor has manipulated the levers of power to pass a sweeping

ABORTION
In April, DeSantis signed a bill that would ban most abortions after six weeks of pregnancy, building on a previous 15-week ban he signed into law that predated the Supreme Court's decision striking down *Roe v. Wade*

EDUCATION
School vouchers are now available to all Floridians regardless of income, while the teaching of gender and sexual topics is banned from kindergarten through 12th grade in public schools, an expansion of last year's "parental rights in education" law

TRANSGENDER RESTRICTIONS
DeSantis-backed laws have barred trans athletes from women's public-school sports, prohibited gender-affirming treatments for minors, and blocked trans people from using their preferred bathrooms in public buildings

right-wing agenda

IMMIGRATION
A new law restricts undocumented immigrants' access to social services and makes it harder for businesses to hire them. DeSantis has also spent more than $1.5 million flying migrants to Martha's Vineyard

CRIMINAL JUSTICE
DeSantis-backed measures permit nonunanimous death-penalty verdicts and allow child molesters to be sentenced to death. A bill cracking down on violent protests was blocked by the courts

FIGHTING 'WOKENESS'
A sweeping ban on schools teaching critical race theory was stopped in court, but educators say it has had a chilling effect nonetheless. DeSantis has also prohibited diversity initiatives at public colleges

DeSantis said, "The last thing we need to do is to monkey this up by trying to embrace a socialist agenda." Democrats decried his verbiage as a racist dog whistle. DeSantis refused to back down or apologize. But while many national observers remember that controversy, in Florida the campaign mostly focused on state issues. "What Ron said to me in 2018 when we were laying out the strategy was, 'We're going to nationalize the primary and localize the general,'" Gaetz tells me. "The plan was to run against Putnam on national issues and then paint Gillum as in the pocket of Big Sugar." In a good year for Democrats, DeSantis defeated Gillum by less than half a percentage point.

Trump has claimed credit for DeSantis' rise, but one former DeSantis adviser says the governor sees his success as foreordained. "He has a providential belief that he will talk sincerely about. He believes he is exactly where God planned him to be at all times," the adviser says. "I'm sure he believes, 'It was nice of Trump to help me kick the sh-t out of Adam Putnam. But it would have happened anyway.'"

THE FLORIDA GOVERNORSHIP has not always been a powerful position. Until 1968, the governor could serve only one term, and until the 1990s he (Florida has only had male governors) shared decisionmaking powers with six other statewide elected officials. Reforms that took effect during Jeb Bush's tenure in the early 2000s shrank the elected cabinet to just three members while also giving the executive more say in judicial nominations. At the same time, term limits approved by voters in a 1992 ballot initiative took hold, turning the legislature into a revolving door where lawmakers could no longer amass power over decades. As DeSantis entered office in 2019, the power of Florida's executive was already at a historic high.

'YOU'RE ON ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER, AND PEOPLE KNOW IT.'

—**DAVID JOLLY,** FORMER GOP REPRESENTATIVE

He was determined to use every bit of it. "One of my first orders of business after getting elected was to have my transition team amass an exhaustive list of all the constitutional, statutory, and customary powers of the governor," he writes in *The Courage to Be Free*. "I wanted to be sure that I was using every lever available to advance our priorities." Aides from the time have corroborated this account, describing a thick binder of information that DeSantis proceeded to devour.

Conscious of his narrow victory, DeSantis initially sought to broaden his appeal. "We got elected by the hair of our chinny-chin-chin, so the goal of the transition was to grow the universe of DeSantis supporters in the state of Florida and do better with nonwhite voters, independents, suburban women, and young people," says Gaetz, who chaired the transition to the governorship. (Once an ally of both men, Gaetz has grown distant with DeSantis since endorsing Trump's 2024 campaign.) DeSantis approved the sale of smokable medical marijuana, appointed Democrats to prominent posts in the administration, raised teacher pay, and proposed record levels of environmental funding for the Everglades. He posthumously exonerated the Groveland Four, Black men wrongly accused of raping a white woman in 1949. When his proclamation honoring the third anniversary of the massacre at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando was criticized for failing to mention the affected groups, DeSantis' office reissued it with a new sentence decrying "hatred towards the LGBTQ and Hispanic communities."

Even early on, though, there were hints of a more assertive approach. DeSantis short-circuited the usual process for state supreme court nominations, allowing him to cement a conservative majority that would be unlikely to overturn his policies, as previous courts had done to his predecessors. He used a new, aggressive interpretation of his powers under state law to remove local elected officials, including Scott Israel, the Broward County sheriff whose response to the Parkland school shooting drew criticism. Previous governors had reserved that right for officials who broke the law, and a state senate special master recommended that Israel be reinstated, but DeSantis pushed through the removal. DeSantis' support for Everglades funding may have been less about the environment than getting back at the powerful sugar industry, whose generous subsidies he had opposed since his days in Congress



DeSantis celebrates his landslide re-election victory with his wife Casey and his children on Nov. 8, 2022

and which had spent more than $10 million backing Putnam in the primary. "Sugar is more powerful than Disney here, by far, and he took them on unapologetically," says Nick Iarossi, a Tallahassee lobbyist and DeSantis ally.

But it was the pandemic, critics and supporters agree, that changed DeSantis. After initially shuttering schools and restaurants, DeSantis grew frustrated by the lack of clear guidance from Washington and the medical establishment. He began doing his own research and soon concluded that much of the early conventional wisdom about COVID-19 was wrong. The spread of the virus could be mitigated but not contained, he believed. Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo of New York was being hailed by the media for his strong leadership even as he sent infected elderly people back to nursing homes, an act of tragic malfeasance intended to prevent a hospital-bed shortage that never materialized. Studying the emerging medical data, DeSantis concluded such fears were based on faulty models, and he almost certainly saved lives by isolating elderly patients. He soon reopened Florida's beaches, schools, and businesses while prioritizing protections, vaccines, and treatments for the most vulnerable citizens.

Gaetz, who talked to DeSantis daily during this period, says the governor often brought up the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic, in which people were wheeled onto beaches for sunlight and ventilation. He fretted about the long-term mental-health effects of shutting people indoors and became emotional describing nursing-home residents dying in isolation, prohibited from seeing their loved ones. DeSantis had surveyed the landscape, watched a stampede of governors go one way, and determined he would do the opposite. "It was very binary," Gaetz recalls. "One group was going to be toast. The other was going to be vindicated."

The crisis hit right after the 2020 legislative session had concluded. Rather than call back the frightened lawmakers to address it, DeSantis seized new powers for himself. Declaring a state of emergency, he claimed unfettered authority to allocate pandemic funds from the federal government. He overrode local governments and school boards that tried to impose closures or mask mandates, and threatened to remove or withhold pay from local officials who sought further restrictions.

Once receptive to input from outside his orbit, he became convinced of his own rightness. "COVID was definitely the switch that flipped, when he started to become a bully," says Nikki Fried, who served at the time as agriculture commissioner, the only Democrat elected statewide alongside DeSantis. Having initially welcomed her outreach, she says, during COVID-19 he stopped returning her calls. Fried, who now chairs the state Democratic Party, began calling DeSantis a "dictator."

At a dinner in Austin in January 2021, Iarossi introduced DeSantis to Elon Musk. The two men proceeded to discuss disease vectors and biotherapies in obsessive detail. DeSantis "was getting the sh-t kicked out of him on CNN," Iarossi recalls. "And he said to me, 'Nick, I don't care what they say about me now. I care what they say six months from now.

I've done the research, and I think I'm right.'" At the time, loosening restrictions seemed like a risk, but DeSantis' confidence was unshakable. "Everyone's in hysteria thinking the world is going to end, all his advisers are telling him not to. But business thrived, the economy thrived, people moved here. It took a year, not six months. But he was right."

AS TRUMP LEFT OFFICE and the pandemic waned, the governor grew more emboldened. In 2021 and 2022, the legislature pushed through DeSantis-backed bills to make it harder to vote, ban vaccine passports, and crack down on "rioting" at protests. The "parental rights in education" bill, better known as "Don't Say Gay," prohibited the teaching of sex and gender in early elementary grades, while the Stop WOKE act banned the teaching of critical race theory (CRT) at schools and businesses. DeSantis signed a 15-week abortion ban, contingent on the yet-to-come reversal of *Roe v. Wade,* and began to express skepticism about the COVID-19 vaccines, appointing a new state surgeon general, Joseph Ladapo, who opposed vaccine and mask mandates while promoting unproven treatments.

Favor-trading was not DeSantis' style; loyalty was not necessarily returned. At the end of one legislative session, he proceeded to theatrically veto budget priorities of the legislative leaders standing alongside him on the stage.

When it came time to redraw the state's congressional districts in 2022, legislators proposed a new map that largely preserved the delegation's balance. A voter-approved constitutional amendment prohibited partisan gerrymandering and sought to protect minority districts, and lawmakers were wary of being slapped down by the courts if they went too far. But DeSantis had read the relevant laws and precedents, and in January 2022 he proposed his own map, which eliminated a majority-Black district in north Florida and gave the GOP a shot at up to four additional seats in Congress.

None too keen on this attempt to usurp their traditional responsibility, legislators ignored DeSantis and passed their own map instead. DeSantis vetoed it. At the same time, he let it be known that Senate president Wilton Simpson, who was running for agriculture commissioner, might not get his endorsement if he didn't go along. Finally, the legislature relented and passed DeSantis' map. A few days later, DeSantis endorsed Simpson, and another Republican candidate who had been running for the post dropped out. (The map, which governed the 2022 elections, still faces court challenges.)

The redistricting fight was pure DeSantis. "He did that single-handedly—nobody pushed him—and he was relentless," one current GOP lawmaker told me. Brian Ballard, a powerhouse lobbyist in Tallahassee and D.C. and an ally of both Trump and DeSantis, says the gambit cemented his dominance. "The [state] senate didn't lay down for him at first. But he showed he was able to use his political popularity in a way that previous governors had not, and it's brought him incredible power."

DeSantis' chief of staff, James Uthmeier, says he has never seen a policymaker so hands-on. "He sits and talks through the nitty-gritty of policy and the budget," says Uthmeier, who previously served as a senior official in Trump's Commerce Department. "He's ingrained in the process in a way I haven't seen working in the Trump Administration or with other public officials."

With polls showing DeSantis' approval ratings among Florida Republicans in the 90s, he moved to spend his skyrocketing political capital. Traditionally, the state senate caucus had recruited candidates for office and funded their campaigns, but DeSantis had other ideas. In statehouse races in the Tampa and Jacksonville areas, he announced his own handpicked candidates, prompting those backed by the senate to drop out. Republicans who went against him drew complaints from their constituents. In the 2022 election cycle, several Florida political consultants told me, their research found DeSantis' endorsement to be the single most important attribute for GOP primary voters. "In 2020, every member in a strong Republican seat campaigned with a picture of Donald Trump," says GOP state representative McFarland. "In 2022, they campaigned with a picture of Ron DeSantis."

His political aims didn't stop at the statehouse. In another unprecedented move, he issued a raft of down-ticket endorsements as well. Working with the conservative parents'-rights group Moms for Liberty, he backed slates of school-board challengers in districts across the state, targeting boards that had tried to impose school closures and mask mandates during the pandemic. He moved to fill the state bureaucracy with the like-minded, stacking traditionally nonpartisan university and hospital boards with right-wing warriors like the anti-critical-race-theory activist Christopher Rufo. When a locally elected Democratic prosecutor announced he would not enforce DeSantis' abortion and transgender policies, DeSantis removed him based on his own reading of the relevant statutes. (A court ruled that the rights of the prosecutor had been violated, but that his dismissal could stand.)

DeSantis and his aides went to war with the press, ignoring media requests or publicizing inquiries they considered off-base on Twitter, urging fans to swarm and harass reporters. At press conferences, he delights in berating members of the "corporate media," often challenging the premise of their questions and accusing them of bias.

'IF HE HAS THE RIGHT, HE DOESN'T HESITATE—AND THE VOTERS LIKE A STRONGMAN.'

—**MAC STIPANOVICH,** FORMER REPUBLICAN OPERATIVE

GIORGIO VIERA—AFP/GETTY IMAGES

He scrupulously avoids the mainstream media, once theatrically turning down an invitation to appear on *The View.* This year, DeSantis' proposal to make it easier to sue media outlets for libel was one of a handful of initiatives the legislature balked at. (DeSantis' staff did not respond to multiple requests to interview him for this article.) At the same time, DeSantis carefully tends his image in conservative media. He appears frequently on Fox News, once granting the channel exclusive rights to cover a bill signing, and doles out interviews and exclusives to right-wing influencers and publications. A pair of local digital outlets, Florida's Voice and the Florida Standard, popped up shortly after DeSantis was elected, helmed by writers with backgrounds in conservative activism. Their funding sources are unknown, but with DeSantis' help, they frequently break news about the governor, forcing the rest of the press corps to follow their lead. The strategy has made him a household name to the national GOP base, and he attracts large crowds at appearances across the country.

DeSantis' policies drew the notice of other red-state governors across the country, who began to see Florida as a laboratory for conservative policy. A raft of states have introduced legislation mirroring "Don't Say Gay," and many have followed his lead with bans on transgender athletes and CRT. His battle with Disney has galvanized a national GOP war on "woke" business practices like environmental, social, and governance (ESG) investing. DeSantis donor retreats in Fort Lauderdale last July and Palm Beach in February were styled as policy conferences, with attendees including GOP governors. He was not the first Republican governor to transport border-crossing migrants to liberal cities—a gambit the Trump Administration had considered but rejected as too extreme—but by flying them to tony Martha's Vineyard, he managed to up the ante.

"What DeSantis has done which his predecessors did not do is exploit all of the power inherent in the office of the governor," says Mac Stipanovich, a longtime GOP lobbyist and operative in Tallahassee who left the party after Trump's election. "Just because you have the right to do something doesn't make it right, and his predecessors were conscious of that. There were guardrails. But if he has the right he doesn't hesitate—and the voters like a strongman."

AS A POPULAR GOVERNOR with a weak Democratic opponent, DeSantis was virtually guaranteed to win re-election in 2022. But he craved something bigger. With a war chest of more than $100 million, he instructed his campaign that he wanted to run on his record. Admakers were told to focus on his policies—even the ones that didn't poll well in isolation. The campaign ultimately produced some 70 different commercials, each looking backward at the accomplishments of DeSantis' first term. Not a single ad focused on his promises for the future.

'HE'S NOT CHARMING. BUT HE'S A TERMINATOR.'

—FIONA MCFARLAND, FLORIDA GOP REPRESENTATIVE

DeSantis took the resulting landslide as vindication. If past editions of the legislature tended to do DeSantis' bidding, this year's session—with a GOP supermajority in both the state house and senate stacked with newcomers he handpicked—was engineered to work his will. DeSantis passed down a list of more than 40 legislative priorities and pushed the lawmakers to get started early. Twice before the official March kickoff, he called special sessions to knock out priorities that could have waited, like insurance reform.

Tallahassee observers believe the flurry was choreographed to tee up the launch of a presidential bid that will place his policy record at its center. But unlike the legislative session, the pre-campaign did not go according to plan. DeSantis stumbled on foreign affairs out of the gate, drawing harsh criticism for a statement that described Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a "territorial dispute." Trump has savaged him in personal terms. Some Republicans worry that DeSantis' rush to the right on issues like abortion may come back to bite him.

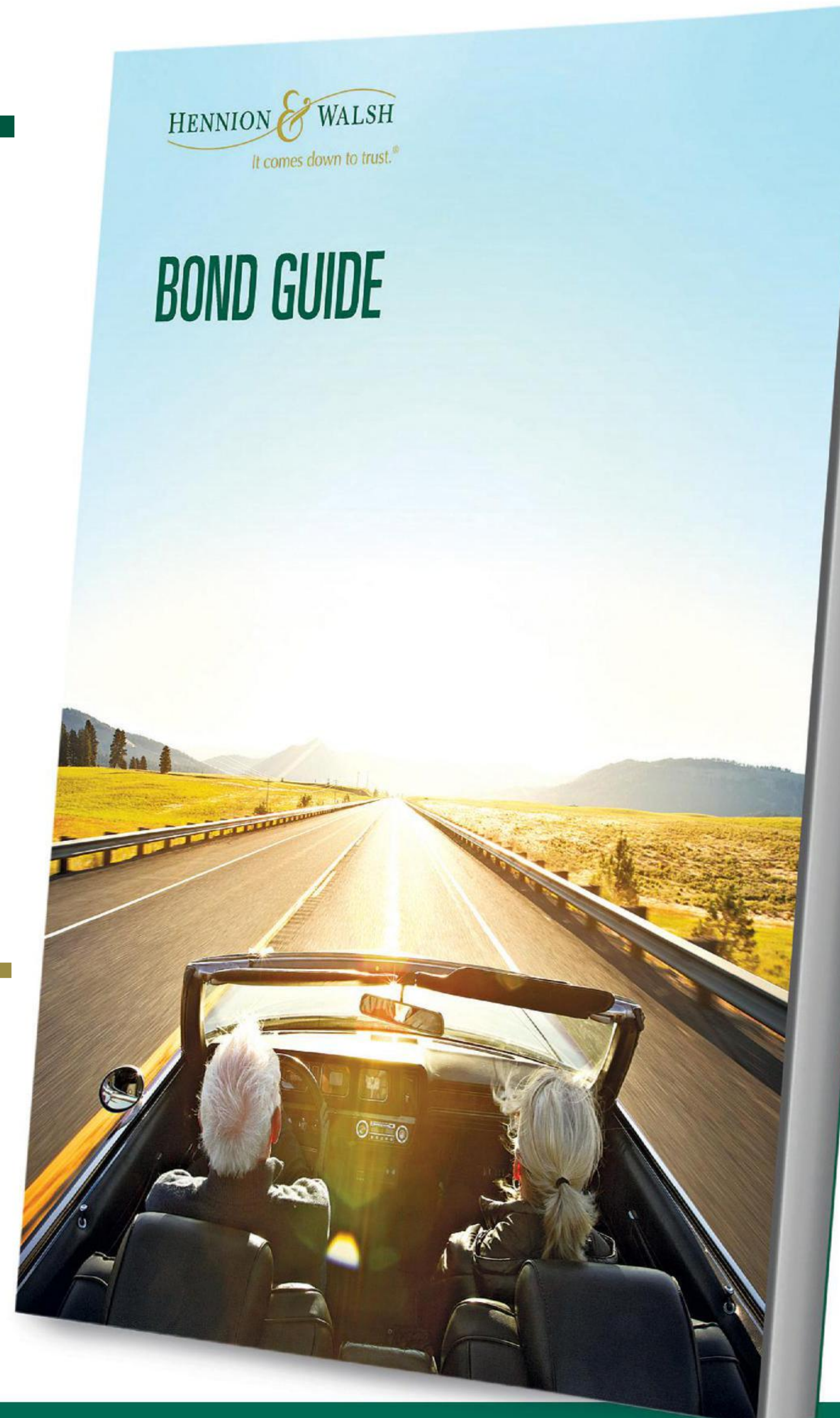
Even allies wonder if DeSantis is cut out for the intense human interaction required in a national campaign. An April trip to D.C. to meet with his former colleagues in Congress ended disastrously, producing a flood of anecdotes about his antisocial ways on Capitol Hill and a slew of new congressional endorsements for Trump. The same bunker mentality that has made DeSantis more feared than loved, enabling him to shut out distractions and dismiss the naysayers, has created an insular operation struggling to do the outreach a presidential campaign requires. His stiff-arming of mainstream media has made it difficult to regain control of the narrative. And Trump's political rise would seem to show that policy, substance, and governing experience may not count for much in today's GOP.

But those who have had a front-row seat to DeSantis' transformation of his state know better than to underestimate him. His presidential run, allies say, will draw on his Florida record to argue he is both more effective and more electable than Trump. To GOP partisans hungry for confrontation but weary of losing, he offers Trumpian aggressiveness without all the baggage. "What got him here isn't personality, it isn't gladhanding," says Iarossi. "It's the relentless pursuit of conservative policies that have made Floridians' lives better and led to a majority of registered Republicans. It's the result of policies and governing." *—With reporting by* LESLIE DICKSTEIN *and* JULIA ZORTHIAN □

MUNICIPAL BONDS. HERE'S WHAT YOU'LL LEARN:

- ✓ The benefits and risks of municipal bonds.
- ✓ How municipal bonds provide federally tax-free income.
- ✓ Why municipal bonds offer the potential for regular income.
- ✓ Strategies for smart bond investing.
- ✓ Municipal bond facts every investor should know.

AND HERE'S WHAT IT COSTS: $0



CALL (800) 316-1846

to get your copy of the Hennion & Walsh Bond Guide.
It's **FREE** and **WITHOUT OBLIGATION**.

About Hennion & Walsh
Since 1990 Hennion & Walsh has specialized in investment grade tax-free municipal bonds. The company supervises over $3 billion in assets in over 16,000 accounts, providing individual investors with institutional quality service and personal attention.

HENNION & WALSH
It comes down to trust.®

© 2023 Hennion and Walsh. Securities offered through Hennion & Walsh Inc. Member of FINRA, SIPC. Investing in bonds involves risk including possible loss of principal. Income may be subject to state, local or federal alternative minimum tax. When interest rates rise, bond prices fall, and when interest rates fall, bond prices rise. If sold or called prior to maturity the amount received may be less than the amount paid, and the yield received may be less than the yield calculated at purchase. Past performance is not guarantee of future results.

Next Generation Leaders

Trendsetters and trailblazers who are guiding the way to a brighter future

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
MARK PECKMEZIAN
FOR TIME



FLORENCE PUGH
PHOTOGRAPHED
ON MARCH 18
IN NEW YORK CITY







U.K.

Florence Pugh

Saving the movie star from extinction

BY ELIANA DOCKTERMAN

WHEN FLORENCE PUGH WAS A CHILD, SHE HATED TO CRY in public. If she had an argument with her parents, she would run to the bathroom, lock the door, and sit under the sink. Only then would she weep. "When I started acting I remember thinking, 'Ooh, this isn't good news,' because we all know how amazing it feels when you see the character you've been following finally crumbles," she says. "And I just couldn't do it."

Now she cries so often in movies that it's become something of a meme—her guttural wails in *Midsommar,* her blubbering in *Little Women,* and her screams in *Don't Worry Darling* have all gone viral. Because a childhood illness affected her breathing, Pugh still has a gravelly voice that lends itself to anguish. She used to imagine her family in coffins to achieve the ultimate ugly cry: "I never wanted it to be prissy. For me, it's snot or nothing." But she's no one-trick pony: equally adept at comedy and action, she has appeared in superhero flicks and indies. She's a magnetic and multifaceted onscreen presence, the kind that doesn't come around very often.

Pugh is in the midst of what might be the biggest year of her career. On the heels of *A Good Person*—a drama written and directed by her ex-partner Zach Braff, which she also produced—she'll star in two highly anticipated movies: Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer* and Denis Villeneuve's *Dune: Part Two.* Both are the sorts of epics that Hollywood rarely makes anymore, especially in an era when franchises, not movie stars, sell tickets.

Studios and directors are fretting that the theatrical experience may die if a new crop of young stars can't lure audiences. A recent National Research Group survey asked moviegoers to name the actors who could get them to a movie theater. The top answers all qualify for AARP cards: Tom Cruise (60), Dwayne Johnson (51), and Tom Hanks (66). Villeneuve says he cast *Dune: Part Two* with the future of cinema in mind. "I needed people who have the necessary charisma," he says. "I think Florence, Zendaya, Timothée [Chalamet], and Austin [Butler], they will be the new power in Hollywood. These strong, charismatic figures will drag people back to the theater."

Pugh has charisma to spare. Along with her famous frown, she deploys her infectious smile at opportune moments, often on the tiny screens where our social feeds scroll. She glowed in royal purple Valentino, a knowing grin on her face and Aperol spritz in her hand, as she strutted around Venice last fall the same day the director she was allegedly feuding with, Olivia Wilde, had to explain why Pugh was absent from a *Don't Worry Darling* press conference. She gleefully called out trolls who scolded her for wearing a transparent dress that showed off her nipples. She beamed when she debuted a new buzz cut at the Met Gala in May.

Her smile betrays a confidence near impossible to achieve at 27. She's honed her control of her emotions into an art for delicate scenes. "Despite her youth, she has a drive and assurance," says Villeneuve. "You feel

IN HER "COOKING WITH FLO" SEGMENTS, PUGH HAS MADE EVERYTHING FROM HOMEMADE MARMALADE TO RATATOUILLE

ONE OF PUGH'S BIGGEST FANS: HER GRAN, WHO HAS WALKED THE RED CARPET WITH THE YOUNG STAR SEVERAL TIMES



'DESPITE HER YOUTH, SHE HAS A DRIVE AND ASSURANCE... SHE'S A RAW DIAMOND.'

—DENIS VILLENEUVE, DIRECTOR OF *DUNE: PART TWO*

you're working with someone who can absolutely go anywhere and do anything emotionally in the most subtle and precise way. She's a raw diamond."

PUGH AND I meet at Locanda Verde, an Italian restaurant in Tribeca. The green juice she ordered keeps separating, and she mindlessly stirs the concoction back together before each sip. Pugh ate here with her parents the night before and requested a table in the corner. The waiter solemnly informed her that that spot was reserved for Robert De Niro, a co-owner. She kept an eager eye out for the megastar all night.

People speak of legends like De Niro in hushed tones. But Pugh argues we need to let go of the concept of the enigmatic movie star: with rare exceptions like Beyoncé, public figures today simply cannot maintain an air of mystery. Luckily Pugh is particularly adept at social media. She started her career posting videos to YouTube singing and playing guitar in her childhood bedroom in Oxford. Success has changed little about her approach.

In the cheeky "Cooking With Flo" Instagram videos that rose to popularity during quarantine, Pugh offered tips gleaned from her restaurateur father. She is designing her kitchen in her new London home with more cooking videos—and even a possible TV series—in mind. "Conversations are happening," she says of a cooking show. "If I were to make something, I wouldn't want it to be polished or clean or fussy."

Her entire image is messy by design. She posts as many photos of sprouting zits as red carpets. Followers might assume this is a bid for relatability. But she's trying to maintain control of her image in a tabloid landscape that glorifies actors' movie-premiere glamour one day and mocks their bad hair day the next. "I would never show one side of me because that's setting myself up to fail," she says. "I don't want anyone to make money catching me out being me. I want to give them all of me."

Pugh learned early the value of defining your own public persona. After her film debut in the 2014 drama *The Falling*, she landed a pilot for a show that never went forward—a blessing considering producers asked her to change her body. She refused and decided she would not return to Hollywood until she had a better grasp of what she wanted to represent. After a breakout role as the dastardly protagonist in the British period drama *Lady Macbeth,* she was drawn back to Los Angeles to play opposite Dwayne Johnson in the WWE film *Fighting With My Family.*

"The person I came back to was a female wrestler with muscles and big thighs who made her own name as a champion," she says. "I quite liked that because the last time I'd been there I was told I needed to lose weight—it was just so not the person I wanted to be." Pugh has worked with lauded directors like Park Chan-wook *(The Little Drummer Girl),* Greta Gerwig *(Little Women),* and Ari Aster *(Midsommar)* portraying strong-willed women who fight against society's expectations.

"Even if they're not defined on the page, I always find some way to make them quite confrontational," she says of her characters. "I never see the bad in them—even when they have killed children and burned boyfriends. I've always understood them as people that needed to do what they had to do to survive."

IF PUGH KNOWS when to fight, she also intuits when to stay mum. Rumors swirled in 2022 about drama on the set of *Don't Worry Darling,* the film directed by Wilde—particularly regarding how Wilde's then rumored relationship with Pugh's co-star Harry Styles and casting decisions were causing tension. Pugh seemed to float above the controversy. Buried in the tepid reviews of the film were raves for Pugh's empathetic take on a woman trapped in a '50s male fantasy. Despite the fervent gossip—or because of it—*Don't Worry Darling* made almost $90 million at the box office, a feat for an adult drama.

Pugh is building a career on films that run the gamut from scrappy indie shoots to megablockbuster productions. No matter the scope, after nearly a decade in the business, Pugh can sense whether a film will succeed based on vibes alone. Has she ever thought, while on set, that a movie was simply falling apart? "Definitely," she says. "A whole film set, it's everybody making a huge effort because they want to be there. And if someone doesn't want to be there or if someone isn't pulling their weight, you can feel it. The film feels wrong." I start to press for specifics and she—exceedingly politely—moves on to a related topic.

Recent experiences on gigantic projects with Nolan and Villeneuve set a high bar. "He has the utmost respect for every single person working on that set," she says of Nolan. And she calls Villeneuve a "bizarre, mad, creative genius" for his ability to render the fantastical world of *Dune* onscreen.

Villeneuve, in turn, describes Pugh as a rambunctious kid: "She's mischievous." Pugh confirms that she and Chalamet, who starred in *Little Women* together, had to be separated in the *Dune* trailer because they were having too much fun. But don't let her playfulness deceive you, Villeneuve warns. Once the cameras roll, "she has firepower." Her peers and fans agree: she's earned nods from the Oscars, BAFTAs, and the Cannes Film Festival, and effusive support from 9.1 million Instagram followers.

ACTORS WHO ENTER the Superhero Industrial Complex can end up trapped in an endless series of interconnected films and shows. After her debut as Black Widow's sister Yelena in 2021's *Black Widow,* Pugh made a cameo in the Disney+ show *Hawkeye* and is scheduled to begin shooting a Marvel ensemble movie, *Thunderbolts,* with Harrison Ford this summer. But in between, she managed to earn a slew of nominations for her small Netflix film *The Wonder.*

"So many people in the indie film world were really pissed off at me. They were like, 'Great, now she's gone forever,'" she says. "And I'm like, no, I'm working as hard as I used to work. I've always done back-to-back movies. It's just people are watching them now. You just have to be a bit more organized with your schedule."

Her future will, she hopes, involve time on the stage. She wrote and performed music in *A Good Person* and wants to sing again. She's working on a love story produced by A24 opposite Andrew Garfield called *We Live in Time.* She is open to a rom-com—and if anyone can help bring back a genre on life support, it's an actor disproving the thesis that movie stars are a dying breed.

We finish our breakfast, leaving behind the half-drunk glass of green juice. Pugh heads to a photo shoot where she finds a more appetizing drink, another Aperol spritz. A couple hours later, her parents, grandmother, and Braff pop by for a visit, and Pugh beckons her Gran—who has recently joined her on several red carpets—to sit beside her. The actor plucks two straws from a cup and sticks them in the spritz so the duo can sip it together. Pugh laughs and applauds as her grandmother dramatically curtsies for the crew. All smiles, no tears.



U.S.

Roze Traore

Blending two cultures

BY SOLCYRÉ BURGA

Like many American children of immigrants, chef Roze Traore navigates two worlds. You can see it in the way he switches between saying Côte d'Ivoire and Ivory Coast when he discusses his new boutique hotel and restaurant, La Fourchette de Roze, located in the West African country, and in our conversation about the difficulties of opening his restaurant abroad.

"Just because I'm from Ivory Coast or my parents are ... doesn't mean that it's not a culture shock for me," Traore, 32, says. "There were certain ingredients that I thought I would have the luxury of having any day, anytime when I create a menu in the States." That process proved more difficult in Ivory Coast, but with new ingredients came new opportunities to innovate.

Traore opened La Fourchette de Roze in January, with the mission of bringing something new to his parents'



native culinary culture. "My approach was never to come in and just take away African food. That's something that they do perfectly," Traore says. "But given my background, I wanted to add and introduce them to a different approach, which is how far I could take these ingredients and merge them together."

Traore, who is also a model, stumbled into his cooking career as a teen who was seeking a form of connection. "Food is always going to be there to heal us. Food is always going to be there to bring us together," he says. He studied at Le Cordon Bleu in Portland, Ore., and rocketed to early fame working at Eleven Madison Park in New York City and cooking for the 2022 Guggenheim International Gala.

When he decided to open his own restaurant, he knew it would be in Grand Bassam, the beach town outside Abidjan where his grandparents had taken him on vacations when he was a child. The popular tourist destination was impacted by a 2016 terrorist attack, which left the community reeling and led to a decline in visitors, but since then, the arts and culture scene has helped the town flourish. The buzz from La Fourchette de Roze's opening is also boosting tourist interest. "I wanted to pick a place that was special and meaningful [so] when I did open, it had a true identity of who I was," Traore says. "These are my roots. This is where my family came from."

TRAORE: GIONCARLO VALENTINE—THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX; PERKINS: TAMMIE JOSKE

AUSTRALIA

Melanie Perkins

Visualizing a world of good in tech

BY SIMMONE SHAH

Melanie Perkins, co-founder and CEO of the online graphic-design tool Canva, has a two-pronged plan for success. First, build one of the world's most valuable companies. Next, do as much good in the world as possible.

The two goals "fuel each other," Perkins, 36, tells TIME. The philosophy might seem like an odd North Star for a company offering templates for presentations and save-the-date cards, but it's just one way Perkins is reimagining the modern tech company.

Headquartered in Sydney, thousands of miles away from Silicon Valley, with its reputation as a global arbiter of innovation, Perkins has built a design platform that easily rivals those offered by giants like Adobe and Microsoft, all while keeping accessibility at the heart of its mission.

After launching in 2013, Canva has grown to offer services in over 100 languages, with 125 million users in 190 countries. The company operates on a "freemium" subscription model that includes basic features at no cost, with the option to pay for upgrades. They also provide free subscriptions to educational organizations and nonprofits. The company counts 85% of *Fortune* 500 companies among its users, but Perkins believes the most salient examples of the company's impact are in how it's changed everyday lives—from refugees using the platform to design résumés as they job hunt in a new country, to a woman creating a flyer that helped her track down her birth mother.

In 2018—the year Canva joined the ranks of "unicorn" startups valued at over $1 billion—just 9% of those new companies had at least one female founder. Recent numbers are likewise dismal: in 2021, the number was only 14%.

Perkins has been comfortable going against the grain. "There's always been forks in the road [where we could] do what every other company is doing, or just do what feels natural. Every time we do what feels natural, it always ends up being the thing that we build on."





ARGENTINA

Bizarrap

Elusive hitmaker

BY MOISES MENDEZ II

Bizarrap cultivates an air of mystery, so much so that when he first started gaining popularity, people questioned whether he was a real person. The Argentinian producer and DJ can usually be spotted in the background of his videos, back to the camera, shades obscuring his eyes, giving the floor—or, more accurately, the mic—to the artists he invites on the megapopular YouTube music-video series he started four years ago. "What I like most is that people get to know my music," he says.

His numbers are impressive: 7.2 billion views on YouTube, 41.8 million monthly listeners on Spotify. Several of his videos and songs have hundreds of millions of views and streams. And Bizarrap, real name Gonzalo Julián Conde, has done it all without releasing an album. His meteoric but unconventional rise signals a shift in the industry, proving that newcomers don't have to follow a certain path to find their audience.

On his channel, the 24-year-old producer and his guests record a simple music video for a jointly composed original song, often featuring his signature electropop sheen. They have gone viral not just for his beats, as with the EDM-infused rap banger with the Puerto Rican rapper Villano Antillano, but also for their content: his collaboration with Residente gave rise to a short-lived feud between the Puerto Rican rapper and J Balvin. Most notably, his January track with Shakira, in which she addressed cheating rumors about her husband for the first



U.S.

Drew Afualo

TikTok's crusader for women

BY MOISES MENDEZ II

As long as men are terrible online, Drew Afualo will have work. "It's like the most aggressive form of job security," she tells TIME. "I'll never run out of content." The 27-year-old creator has amassed 8 million followers on TikTok by giving misogynistic men a taste of their own medicine. The way it usually works: a guy with an alpha-male demeanor uploads a video degrading women, Afualo's followers alert her to its presence, and she posts a video in response.

Her clapback usually puts their own tactics to work against them. If they can make hurtful comments about women's appearances, her philosophy goes, she can silence them by showing them how it feels. "Ask any firefighter: You fight fire with fire," she says. "They burn everything in front of it so the fire has nowhere to go."

The internet has never been a safe place for women. According to the Pew Research Center, 33% of women under 35 say they have been sexually harassed online. While some might find Afualo's tactics less than diplomatic, her cleverly constructed roasts have helped deflate the egos of many a misogynistic troll—and you have to be a gifted comedian, in concept and delivery, to come up with the comebacks she does. Afualo asks that those who find her content offputting interrogate their own internalized misogyny and, for many women, tendency to seek validation from men.

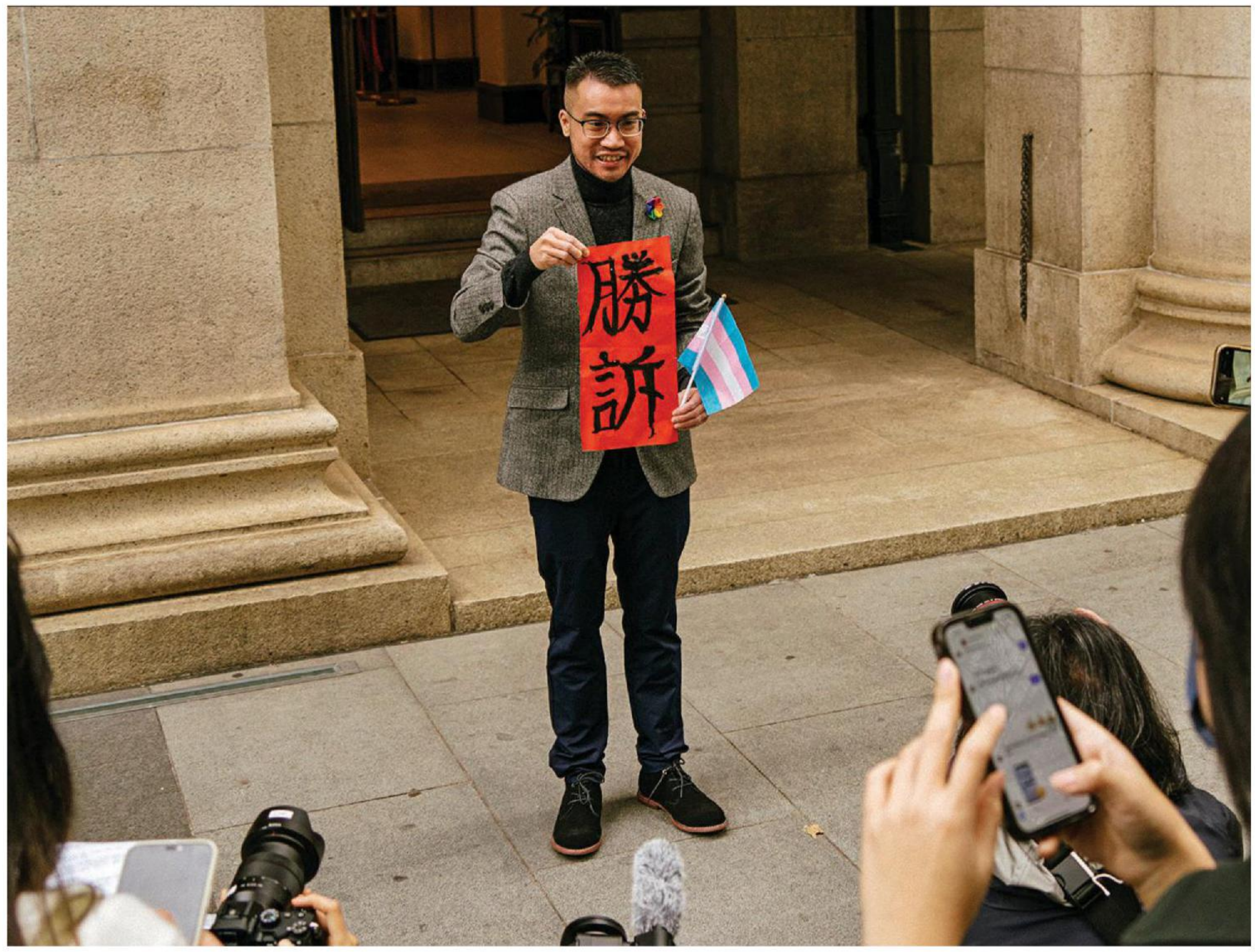
time, exploded in popularity, breaking several Guinness World Records. Suddenly, it had become much more difficult for Bizarrap to fade into the background.

Still, the artist has continued to cede the limelight. “I make music every day,” he says. “I like thinking about ideas for my videos, making teasers. I’m always thinking about the next step.” He leaves clues on social media as to what those steps might be, and who he might collaborate with—although he’s worked with some of the biggest names in the Latin music scene, there are still several on his wish list. At the end of the day, it’s all about the songs: “What’s important to me is that the music speaks for itself.”

“It’s so common for men to be terrible online and suffer no consequence because it’s easy to be anonymous,” she says. “I like to think of myself as a tangible consequence.”

Consuming such a large amount of “rancid material,” as she puts it, could take a toll on one’s mental health. But Afualo sees the fruits of her labor in the comments section—both literally and in her Spotify exclusive podcast, aptly named *The Comment Section With Drew Afualo,* where she interviews guests like Kim Petras and Bob the Drag Queen—and in messages from supporters. They tell her she’s given them the strength to confront the men who treat them poorly or to break up with abusive partners. “It does get very heavy to deal with all the hate I receive—which is a lot,” Afualo says. But knowing she’s inspired her followers to stand up for themselves, she says, “helps remind me why I do what I do.”

AFUALO: DARRELL JACKSON; BIZARRAP: PATRICIA J. GARCINUNO—GETTY IMAGES; TSE: ANTHONY KWAN—AP



HONG KONG

Henry Edward Tse

A trailblazer for transgender rights in Asia

BY CHAD DE GUZMAN

Since returning to Hong Kong in 2017, transgender activist Henry Edward Tse says he feels like he’s been running a marathon—except the government keeps moving the finish line.

Tse, 32, scored a historic legal victory in February when the city’s top court ruled against requiring transgender people to undergo full gender-affirming surgery to change their legal gender markers. For many transgender people, surgery can be costly and dangerous, and LGBTQ advocates hope the ruling could pave the way for other nations in largely conservative Asia struggling to implement more inclusive policies. Tse says the continent is “the epicenter of change for the global trans movement.”

But months later, a small *F* still sits where an *M* should be on Tse’s ID. “I’m essentially blocked from participating in public life,” he tells TIME. “Whenever I use gender-segregated spaces, it’s the same story again.”

Tse and other advocates continue to protest the stalled implementation by the city’s legislative and executive branches of their judicial victory. In a cosmopolitan former British colony that in recent years has quelled many forms of dissent in pursuit of mainland China’s national security, Tse knows he fights an uphill battle.

A “patriots-only” congressional body has meant LGBTQ rights in the Chinese enclave tend to fall short of basic international considerations and typically toe Beijing’s less inclusive policy line. And despite wider public acceptance of sexual minorities, some population segments remain unsupportive—including Tse’s own parents.

It would be understandable for Tse to want to leave Hong Kong, given his homeland’s hurdles. But with a law education under his belt, and advice from allies in “more democratized” Japan and Taiwan, Tse has taken a deliberate, calculated approach to transforming transgender rights in Hong Kong through judicial reviews—living his belief that law is the vehicle to protect human rights.

With the court ruling yet to be implemented, Tse views his judicial victory as merely “staged,” and he says he’d rather stay in the city to continue the fight.

“If I don’t do it, I don’t see [how] anyone could,” Tse says. “It’s a very demanding job.”



BRAZIL

Rene Silva

Empowerment through local journalism

BY CIARA NUGENT

The story of the start of *Voz das Comunidades,* a community newspaper covering the majority-Black working-class neighborhoods that surround Rio de Janeiro, reads like the plot of a children's movie.

In 2005, 11-year-old Rene Silva persuaded teachers at his school in the Complexo de Alemão district to let him join the student newspaper—despite protests from older kids who thought he was too young. Within months he outgrew that gig, recruiting four other children to help him launch his own newspaper covering the entire favela, as Brazil's informal neighborhoods are known.

"I used to look through papers and I didn't see the favela I knew represented," he says. "The media only ever talked about drug trafficking, violence, death—so people from outside thought that's all there is here."

Eighteen years later, *Voz das Comunidades* continues to chip away at those stereotypes. Now formally recognized as an NGO, it has 35 staff members who cover stories on culture, politics, sports, education, and problems of state neglect.

Silva, a prominent activist, has the ear of journalists and top editors at many of Brazil's largest media outlets, and says he reaches out to them if their coverage of favelas is biased or limited. Major newspapers and broadcasters regularly poach Silva's staff, bringing the perspective of favela residents—a group poorly represented in a country where 77% of journalists are white—to mainstream audiences.

Silva still gets the impression that many journalists writing on such problems have "never stepped foot in a favela." But he says he is optimistic about the journey he started nearly two decades ago. He has "a lot of hope" that current President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (no relation) will come through on campaign promises to improve lives for favela residents.

Now working primarily on fundraising and the long-term direction of *Voz das Comunidades,* Silva says he aims to "continually expand" the organization. That includes a planned program for his staff to run workshops in public schools around the country, in person and remotely, to inspire kids like him to start their own projects.

"My mission is to make sure that the favelas have a bigger and bigger voice."

U.S.

Sage Lenier

Centering solutions in the climate fight

BY KYLA MANDEL

For climate activist Sage Lenier, 24, education is a tool for empowerment. Too often, she says, higher education focuses solely on the problems instead of exploring solutions to the world's many pressing environmental challenges. The result can leave students feeling overwhelmed and depressed.

So in 2018, as a 19-year-old student at the University of California, Berkeley, Lenier designed the Solutions for a Sustainable & Just Future course. Since then it has enrolled over 1,800 students, 600 of whom Lenier taught herself. "We are advocating for a better climate education that really prepares us for what a climate-change future is gonna look like," she says.

More than just rethinking how we learn about environmental problems, it's a bigger, systemwide perspective that drives Lenier's work. The goal, she says, is to inspire young people, and equip them with the tools needed to figure out how they can best take action—right now.

"I'm not going to sit around and wait for sweeping national legislation. So, what can you do at the city, state, or county level to push the needle?" she asks.

Building on the program's success at Berkeley, in the spring of 2021 a onetime virtual version of the course was made available online in partnership with the nonprofit Zero Waste USA. And in January, Lenier—who recently completed a fellowship with the Op-Ed Project and the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication—helped launch the Sustainable & Just Future nonprofit with the aim of bringing the solutions course to other universities around the world.

"You shouldn't be able to get a high school diploma or college degree without having a basic understanding of the ecological systems that keep you alive," says Lenier.

Seeing the tangible impacts of the course was "transformative for me," she says. According to surveys by her nonprofit, 71% of students have said they are, or plan to be, involved in an environmental organization or initiative thanks to the course.

"People would come out of the program and say, 'I'm a different person. I've decided to do XYZ with my life. I've decided to start this community initiative,'" she says. "Being able to hold space for that change—that's the most important thing I need to do."



SILVA: RODRIGO OLIVEIRA FOR TIME; LENIER: MARISSA LESHNOV FOR TIME

SOUTH KOREA

NewJeans

K-pop's next act

BY CHAD DE GUZMAN

Hyein just turned 15, but her birthday wish is unusually purposeful for a teenager: "I want to show more of my skills and different sides of me that I haven't shown yet," she says. This youthful drive to keep growing is a common denominator among Hyein and her NewJeans bandmates: Minji, Haerin, Hanni, and Danielle, who are all under 20.

A year ago, no one knew who NewJeans was. But since it dropped its first music video in August 2022, the nascent K-pop girl group—managed by the record label ADOR, a subsidiary of the South Korean entertainment behemoth HYBE, which launched boy band BTS to international acclaim—has already reached global milestones even faster than its more senior counterparts in the industry. Two of NewJeans' singles stayed on the *Billboard* 100 for five weeks this year, and in March the band became the fastest Korean act ever to hit 1 billion streams on Spotify in just 219 days, despite having released only a handful of songs. This August, NewJeans will become the first K-pop girl group to perform at Lollapalooza.

NewJeans' popularity isn't exactly surprising. ADOR CEO Min Hee-jin was once responsible for the branding of many enduring names in the K-pop world like Shinee, EXO, and Girls' Generation. Now helming her own label, Min has spoken of breaking established industry expectations, which resonated with NewJeans members. (The band's name is a wordplay on "new genes"—as in the next generation of K-pop—and the timeless style of denim.)

"We're always trying to create a fresh vibe," says Danielle of NewJeans' distinctive style. Clear Y2K influences appear in



their fashion and their songs, produced by musicians known for their experimental, more underground discography. "This is new, but it's also bringing back all these memories from the past."

As cutthroat as the K-pop industry is said to be, the members of NewJeans are happy to take things in stride. They're focused on enjoying the process and just making music that they want to hear. "K-pop is such a big thing," Hanni says. "I don't know if you could really even predict what it's going to be in the future."



NEWJEANS: ADOR; FITZPATRICK: TRACY WILCOX—PGA TOUR/GETTY IMAGES



U.K.

Matt Fitzpatrick

An exemplary athlete

BY SEAN GREGORY

Matt Fitzpatrick, the emergent golfer who will defend his 2022 U.S. Open title at the Los Angeles Country Club in mid-June, leaned on a neat mental trick at this year's Masters. Fitzpatrick, 28, hadn't fared well at Augusta in previous starts: since 2016, he's finished, on average, in 27th place. So he recalibrated his expectations. "Anything better than that, I've got to take the positives from it," says Fitzpatrick. "I felt like that kept me grounded throughout the week." Fitzpatrick finished tied for 10th, his best in seven years. A week later, he won the PGA event in Hilton Head Island, S.C. Following his early-spring roll, Fitzpatrick rose to sixth in the World Golf Rankings, tops for his career.

As golf seeks out players to carry the sport into the post–Tiger Woods era, Fitzpatrick is making his play. He's taken an intensely analytical approach to improving his game, incorporating sports science—Fitzpatrick closely monitors his sleep—video breakdowns of his swing, and other stats to gain an edge. "We've done a lot of work with that," says Fitzpatrick, "just to find those small 1% gains. I'm always pushing to be better."

Fitzpatrick grew up in Sheffield, England, spending summers on putting greens instead of at parties with his friends. As a rail-thin 18-year-old, he became the first English player in 102 years to win the U.S. Amateur championship. Fitzpatrick turned professional in 2014, after playing a handful of tournaments for Northwestern University.

He's kept close ties to home, acting as a fundraising ambassador for the Sheffield Children's Hospital and donating $80,000 to help pay for a new CT scanner there. He's also donated to U.K. charities that research neurological disorders and offer countryside holidays for patients suffering from Parkinson's, MS, and other conditions. "I do think it's important to give back," Fitzpatrick says.

If Fitzpatrick triumphs in Los Angeles, he'll join Curtis Strange and Brooks Koepka as the only men's golfers to win back-to-back U.S. Opens since 1989. Playing conditions, as usual at the U.S. Open, are certain to be difficult. "I don't feel like any holes give you a breather," he says. "The fairways are tight, the greens are firm, the roughs high. It's mentally fatiguing, as well as physically." Not to worry. Fitzpatrick's proved to be good at staying grounded. And being a force to reckon with in golf.

ADVERTISEMENT

THE OCEAN RACE

RACING TOGETHER FOR THE OCEAN

In the race to protect the ocean we need all hands on deck, because despite the seas being vital to all life on Earth they are deteriorating at an alarming rate.

At The Ocean Race we understand the power of teamwork, which is why we are working with partners who share our passion and commitment for a sustainable future.

Through our 'Partnership with Purpose' programme we are working together to inspire action at every level. The global platform that our round-the-world sailing Race provides, allows organisations to amplify their purpose-led programmes and motivate their customers, staff and stakeholders to get onboard with taking action for our blue planet. Together we are finding solutions and making waves. These are some of the like-minded partners we have united with:



Volvo Cars is the longest standing partner of The Ocean Race, having used the platform provided by our global sporting event to build their brand for over 20 years. The Premier Partner is a leader in driving change in the global automotive industry and is aiming to become climate neutral by 2040.

11th Hour Racing works to mobilise sports, maritime and coastal communities to inspire solutions for the ocean. As a Premier Partner and a Founding Partner of the Racing with Purpose programme, the organisation is helping the race create impact through ocean science, learning programmes and high-level summits.

Helly Hansen, a global leader in technical sailing apparel and our Official Clothing Supplier, is innovating with materials developed from recycled plastic and using the opportunity provided by the Race to explore more sustainable technologies.

GAC Pindar is our Official Logistics Partner, responsible for the impressive operation of transporting the event infrastructure and team equipment to stopover cities around the world. GAC is tracking and reducing greenhouse gas emissions across the event operation and working with the Race to make the event climate positive.



Ulysse Nardin is our Time to Act Partner. The pioneering watchmaker is committed to driving urgent actions to protect the Ocean. Accelerating the use of innovative alternative materials, Ulysse Nardin has made timepieces largely composed of upcycled fishing nets, including The Ocean Race DIVER watch.

Archwey, our Official Plastic-free Ocean Partner, is a sustainable materials engineering group with the mission to eliminate the use of fossil-fuel based plastic products. Their products, including hangers and furniture used in the Race, are made of BLUEWAVE®; a material that is up to 100% recycled and recyclable, made from plastic waste that could otherwise end up in our ocean.

We thank each and every one of our partners for their instrumental support and look forward to continuing on this journey. Together we can win the greatest race to date: the race for the ocean.

Discover more at
theoceanrace.com/racingwithpurpose

Time Off



STAYING POWER

BY NICOLE CHUNG

American Born Chinese, the best-selling graphic novel, finally comes to television

SOURCES: MACMILLAN (8); DISNEY+ (3)

INSIDE

JASON ISBELL IS A DIFFERENT KIND OF COUNTRY STAR

WHAT HAS BECOME OF JOHNNY DEPP

THE BEST OF THE CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

ILLUSTRATION BY KATIE KALUPSON FOR TIME



Yeo Yann Yann and Chin Han as Christine and Simon Wang



AFTER YEARS OF PRINTING COMICS AT KINKO'S and selling them at conventions and local shops, Gene Luen Yang didn't expect his 2006 graphic novel *American Born Chinese* to get the attention it did. Blending the coming-of-age journey of Jin Wang, the son of Chinese American immigrants, with the adventures of characters from the Chinese epic *Journey to the West,* the best-selling book was a National Book Award finalist and won the American Library Association's Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature. Yet despite its success, a screen adaptation wasn't a goal for the author.

"I don't think there was a lot of interest in shows with Asian American protagonists back then," Yang tells me. The Margaret Cho–led *All-American Girl* had been canceled in 1995 after one season, and networks had hardly rushed to pursue other shows centering the experiences of Asian Americans. Plus, he had his own doubts: he thought it would be hard to effectively adapt and translate the edgiest of the book's three storylines—in which he has a character called "Chin-Kee" embody various racist anti-Asian stereotypes in an attempt to illustrate how harmful they are—for a TV audience. Then, a few years ago, he met Melvin Mar, a producer whose credits include the ABC sitcom *Fresh Off the Boat,* who in turn introduced him to Kelvin Yu, a producer and writer *(Bob's Burgers)* who also appeared on Aziz Ansari's Netflix series *Master of None.* Yang says Yu understood the challenges of bringing the graphic novel to life onscreen, and also had ideas about how to expand the story and the cast, address the difficult plotline, and make sure the show could resonate with a new generation.

Mar, Yu, and Yang are now among the executive producers on *American Born Chinese,* a new family-friendly series that premiered May 24 on Disney+ and is directed by Lucy Liu and Destin Daniel Cretton *(Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings).* Yu, the showrunner, explains that both the television-production landscape and viewers' expectations have shifted over the years. "When I was growing up, it was a few networks trying to appeal to tens of millions of viewers, but that's not where we are now," he says. "Look at what's popular on streaming—it tends to be things that aren't straight down the middle. People are more willing and able to dive in."

AMERICAN BORN CHINESE features what Yu refers to as "an embarrassment of riches of Asian and Asian American talent." Ben Wang, whom Yu jokingly calls "the Asian American Michael J. Fox" because "you can't help but root for him," stars as teenage everyman and emerging hero Jin Wang. Daniel Wu and Jim Liu portray Sun Wukong, the Monkey King, and his son, Wei-Chen, while Yeo Yann Yann and Chin Han give two of the show's most emotionally resonant performances as Jin's parents Christine and Simon Wang. And there's a mini-reunion of cast members from Best Picture winner *Everything Everywhere All at Once,* as Academy Award winners Michelle Yeoh and Ke Huy Quan and Academy Award nominee Stephanie Hsu lend additional star power. Once "the only Asian face" on sets, Quan tells me it was a joy to collaborate with so many fellow Asians and Asian Americans: "It warmed my heart to see how far we've come."

While the book's three distinct storylines—all focused on individuals grappling with questions of identity and belonging—come together toward the end, the new series allows its many arcs and characters (human and divine) to interact from the beginning. It also brings the story from the '90s into the present and spends more time at home with the Wang family than the book, in which Jin's parents are minor characters. When you turn a self-contained 240-page graphic novel into an eight-episode series, you're going to have to add some material. But far from feeling extraneous, the family scenes are among the funniest and most moving in the show: Christine taking Jin shopping and striking out with every suggestion; Simon realizing that he has let his wife down by giving up on some of their shared dreams; Jin unhappily listening to his parents argue in a language he struggles with from the other side of the wall. Many of the challenges Jin faces, his questions about who he is and where he belongs, are mirrored in his immigrant parents' lives.

'It's a privilege to get to elevate so many talented people. It's a time for us to flex.'

KELVIN YU, SHOWRUNNER

Time Off includes reporting by Julia Zorthian



Ke Huy Quan as Freddy Wong



Daniel Wu as Sun Wukong, the Monkey King

Chin Han points out that in their scenes together, he and Yeo Yann Yann performed "over 90%" of their dialogue in Mandarin, with subtitles: "And the writers trusted it would land, and trusted the audience to follow the story and the emotional beats." Both said they appreciated the show's portrayal of an Asian American family. "An Asian family is often seen in a particular way, focused on achievement, but my experience of being within an Asian family is much more interesting and varied," says Chin Han. Yeo Yann Yann loved that her character was "trying so hard to understand her son. She's not the typical Tiger Mom we see on some shows."

In the series, there is no cousin "Chin-Kee"; instead, we meet Freddy Wong, a character, played by Quan, on a '90s show within the show. Jin is humiliated when a classmate compares him to the accident-prone Wong, the butt of every joke on the old sitcom. Quan initially turned down the role because he feared it was "exactly the kind of portrayal of Asian characters that we don't want to see in 2023," but changed his mind when he learned more about the character's journey.

"We actually get to meet the actor who played the character later on," Quan says, referring to an episode in which viewers learn what it felt like to always be the punch line, not the hero. "It was us bringing a mirror, showing the audience what it was like being an Asian actor in the '80s and '90s. Those were the kind of roles I was auditioning for, left and right. They were trying to show how representation like this trickles down and affects a regular kid like Jin—what it does to his self-esteem, his sense of identity."

FULL OF STUNTS and jokes and mythological figures, anchored by a realistic and heartfelt family story, *American Born Chinese* plunges readers into worlds both like and unlike our own and resists easy categorization. It also doesn't seem to have to grapple with the question of whether a sizable American audience will watch or understand a show about an Asian American family—perhaps because that question has been answered by shows like *Fresh Off the Boat,* which ran for six seasons. "Some previous shows about Asian Americans—and there aren't many, right?—were sort of forced to deal with certain aspects of the experience because nobody had ever done it before," Wang says. "Ours is one of the first shows about an Asian American experience that feels like it can just have fun."

American Born Chinese is nothing like *Everything Everywhere All at Once,* yet the projects share more than cast members—a sense of playfulness and creative freedom permeates both. Yu says one of the lessons he took from working on *Master of None* is that an audience will respond when creators are "laser-specific" about an experience. *American Born Chinese* is a product of many individuals' experiences—Yu based Jin's parents on his own and the character of Freddy Wong on one of his first acting roles; the set designers took inspiration from their families' homes for the Wangs' house. "If you make something true, something you like, something that makes you laugh—if you do all that, and other people don't like it, you can sleep at night," Yu says. "What you couldn't live with is if you pandered to what you thought an audience wanted."

I was in my 20s when I first encountered *American Born Chinese.* It was only the third or fourth graphic novel I'd read at the time, and I remember being first charmed and then drawn into the imaginative world of the book, though I was outside its target age range and my upbringing as a Korean American adoptee bore little resemblance to Jin's. Asian American characters were scarce in the books I'd read growing up—when I did find us, we were often stereotypes or sidekicks—but I'd always wanted to believe that there was an audience for stories focused on our lives, our families, our histories. I wanted to help write those stories, and I also wanted to read more and more of them. I still do. If it is slightly easier to find them now, it is in part because readers—and viewers—continue to demand more.

"It's a privilege to get to elevate so many talented people. It's a time for us to flex," Yu tells me. "The door has cracked open, and the responsibility is now ours—what are we going to do with it?"

Yang is gratified to know the comics he once drew and stapled by hand have become a foundation on which others can build their own Asian American stories. Now that his book is a show, the collective work of so many, his creation is "no longer a 'me' story," he says, but "an 'us' story." He hopes viewers will reflect on "whatever part of their lives makes them feel like an outsider, [and] learn to see that as a gift." It's a point echoed by Quan: "We all work so hard to find ourselves, our identity, and sometimes we want to be like others. But there's beauty in being who we are. We all need to give ourselves a little more love."

Chung is a TIME contributor and the author of A Living Remedy

DISNEY+



Isbell, seated, with the band the 400 Unit

PROFILE

Jason Isbell is finding his purpose

BY SILAS HOUSE

JASON ISBELL SAYS THE DESIRE TO BE HONEST AND FAIR is his compass. "One day I decided: 'This is what I'm going to claim as the purpose for why I'm here,'" he says. "I think it's to leave the place a little bit better than I found it, and to experience all the things that I can experience."

This year, Isbell is certainly experiencing plenty. He is releasing two albums, has a role in Martin Scorsese's *Killers of the Flower Moon,* and is the subject of an HBO documentary.

Isbell, 44, broke onto the music scene with the rock band Drive-By Truckers in 2001 and went solo in 2007. But his 2013 album, *Southeastern,* changed his career not too long after he changed his life by becoming sober. Since then he has won four Grammys, become known as one of the country's leading singer-songwriters, and gained a legion of devoted fans, including Bruce Springsteen and the late John Prine.

Isbell is thoughtful and tenderhearted, but also decisive and tough. He listens closely and looks people in the eye when he speaks to them. Quick to laughter, he also displays a keen intelligence with an expansive vocabulary, whether he's discussing the complexities of allegory in songwriting or the worries of the modern age.

Those concerns are at the heart of his latest album, *Weathervanes,* a collection of 13 original songs that will be released June 9, marking his sixth studio collaboration with the 400 Unit.

"I think we're all worried about the same things, we just have different ideas about how to resolve those concerns. When I'm trying to tackle a big issue ... if I go into it like I'm trying to tell a story ... then that's hard to argue with. It's hard to argue with one person saying, 'I am scared.'"



The 13 tracks on Weathervanes *brim with both joy and sorrow*

The album includes songs like "Save the World," about a father's fears of his daughter going to school amid constant shootings. The rousing "Death Wish" features a narrator who, like many, loves someone suffering mental illness. There are lovely ballads, lyrics that complexify addiction, and three songs where men offer advice on ways to navigate life, which he calls a "Southern tradition." One of them, "Cast Iron Skillet," has already gained popularity as a single—and led to Lodge molding a custom Jason Isbell skillet.

"Middle of the Morning" is a highlight, featuring perhaps Isbell's most vulnerable vocals, wherein someone who "was raised to be a strong and silent Southern man" is revealing their depression. Isbell has always been open about his battles with anxiety, a theme of the HBO documentary *Jason Isbell: Running With Our Eyes Closed,* released in April.

Weathervanes also takes on regret, most powerfully on "White Beretta." Told from the point of view of a man who, 25 years later, regrets that he wasn't more supportive of his girlfriend who was terminating a pregnancy, it offers a plaintive refrain: "It was so many years ago/ Oh and I just didn't know/ but that ain't no excuse."

"This song did come from personal experience," Isbell says. "I feel like that song, the melody, the chord structure, the arrangement of the song, it all lines up to the point where you don't necessarily feel like you're listening to a song, it feels more like you're experiencing a story."

***WEATHERVANES* OPERATES** as a collection of precise short stories, full of imagery and sensory details. The songs are full of desperation, beauty, and wit, populated with everyday Americans fighting tremendous battles but also living lives of complex joys and sorrows.

Despite his success Isbell still feels close to his working-class roots. He lives on a bucolic farm outside of Nashville with his wife, singer-songwriter Amanda Shires (who also plays fiddle and sings background vocals on *Weathervanes*), and their daughter. But he says he's never far away from the trailers and back roads of northern Alabama where he grew up.

In a year full of work, Isbell is also marking the 10th anniversary of *Southeastern* in September by releasing a new edition that includes a live recording of the original album, demos, and new packaging.

Southeastern and *Weathervanes* bookend 10 years of remarkable growth for Isbell as an artist and as a person. He's also become a progressive force: during the pandemic he was one of the most vocal artists calling for safety measures at venues, he has insisted on featuring Black women as openers to many of his shows, and he's been active in raising money for LGBTQ issues and for reproductive rights.

"I believe that people should be allowed to be who they want, to love who they want. I think there is a big systemic racial issue in our country," he says. "And if those are the things I believe and I don't say them out loud, then I'm being dishonest with myself."

The value system of his maternal grandfather is especially on his mind these days. "[He] is in the last stage of his life. He's always been very patient, very gentle, very kind," Isbell says. His mother has just told him that his grandfather had not been expressing any regrets, only calling out lovingly for family members. "Imagine getting through 83 years and the only thing that's on your mind at the end is people you care about . . . You don't have any apologies to make. I can't think of a better way to end it than that."

COURTESY DANNY CLINCH

House, a novelist, is the poet laureate of Kentucky



ESSAY

Johnny Depp, at Cannes, was a spectacle of his own making

BY STEPHANIE ZACHAREK/CANNES, FRANCE



Depp's star has faded, both onscreen and off

THE AGING PROCESS IS KIND TO NO ONE, AND THAT includes Johnny Depp.

On May 16, Depp was in Cannes to walk the red carpet for the festival's opening-night film, Maïwenn's misunderstood-mistress extravaganza *Jeanne du Barry,* in which Depp plays King Louis XV, whose devotion to his favorite extramarital squeeze brought scandal upon Versailles. When it was announced that a Depp film would be opening the festival, murmurs of *"Sacre bleu!"* were heard far beyond the kingdom, though perhaps not so much in France: the festival itself has opened its arms wide to Depp, who hasn't exactly been untouched by controversy in the past few years, given his involvement in two high-profile defamation suits connected with allegations that he physically abused his former wife Amber Heard. (The jury ruled that Heard defamed Depp on three counts and awarded him $15 million in damages; Depp was found guilty of one of three charges in Heard's countersuit, and she was awarded $2 million in compensatory damages.)

The allegations, and the details of the subsequent messy trials, are horrifying enough by themselves. The trollish Depp fans who took to social media to harass Heard and the women who stood by her made the situation uglier. You'd have to have been cryogenically frozen through most of 2022 to have missed it. Yet at the festival's opening press conference on May 15—the event just wrapped its 76th edition—Cannes chief Thierry Frémaux defended the festival's choice to kick off with the film. "If there's one person in this world who didn't find the least interest in this very publicized trial, it's me," he said. "I don't care what it's about. I care about Johnny Depp as an actor."

Frémaux's ostrich-head-in-the-sand act is disingenuous. But his last two statements entwine opposing ideas that bear thinking about. Is it possible to care about acts Depp may have committed, and to care about what happens to women when they come forward with allegations of domestic violence? And also to care about Johnny Depp as an actor—as a performer who, at certain points of his career, if no longer, was capable of bringing us the kind of joy that we go to the movies for in the first place?

THOUGH DEPP STILL HAS legions of fans who will not give up the *Black Pearl* for love or money—quite a few showed up in Cannes to cheer him on—many of us who used to love him can't look at him as we did in the 1990s. The Depp of *Donnie Brasco,* of *What's Eating Gilbert Grape,* of *Ed Wood* and *Dead Man,* was magnificent to behold, an actor of microshaded subtlety and unforced charm. Even his roles in the earlier Tim Burton movies—as a somber, stammering Ichabod Crane in *Sleepy Hollow,* or a winsome artificial boy in *Edward Scissorhands*—showed layers of depth within their expressionist stylization. His translucent silent-movie-star skin, eyes capable of shifting emotional colors within the space of a heartbeat: to watch him was to sink into the deepest pleasures an actor can give us.

Then Depp began to hide—or allow himself to be hidden—in the bedraggled pirate ruffles and rock-star eyeliner of the dismal *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies, and the "Look at me!" multitoned pancake of Burton's exhaustingly eccentric characters. His lost-boy naivete began to come off as shtick. In the *Pirates* movies, his googly-eyed mannerisms drove audiences wild. Why bother with acting when gimmickry will do the trick?

According to the current rules of how we're supposed to view male artists accused of unspeakable behavior, it should be easier to despise Depp as a human now that it's become so hard to defend him as an actor. Righteous anger is the easiest fix for complex feelings. Even defending the *artistry* of a great or once great filmmaker or actor—Roman Polanski, Woody Allen, Bernardo Bertolucci—who has

SOURCE CREDIT: EVERETT COLLECTION (2); GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY CANNES FILM FESTIVAL (4)



committed or been accused of committing a heinous act is enough to get you branded a traitor. Essayist Claire Dederer has just written a whole book about how we might think about what she calls "monstrous men." It's normal to feel conflicted about artists we love, or once loved, but we've somehow been conditioned to believe that even conflicted feelings are bad. God forbid we hold two or more ideas at once.

I NO LONGER HAVE much invested in who the actor Johnny Depp is today, and I have serious doubts about him as a human being. But watching him both in *Jeanne du Barry* and on the red carpet only made me miserable. *Jeanne du Barry* is tastefully handsome, as well as sometimes thunderously dumb, but it's not unwatchable. Maïwenn herself plays the Countess du Barry, painting her as the Fun Gal of Versailles—wearing big clown stripes! donning breeches and tromping around on horseback! And she "owns" a Black child, given to her by her paramour, but don't hold that against her—she's really nice to him.

As the ruler who ostensibly adores her, Depp—in some scenes his cheeks and lips monstrously rouged, almost like a garish Edward Scissorhands—merely looks like a guy who has no idea how he landed in Versailles. His lines, in French, have a waxy stiffness. His eyes look beady and glazed. This is Depp's most high-profile film in years, but it's less a comeback than a tepid lurching into a small spotlight.

The photos and footage of Depp on the red carpet don't make the story any happier. He looked to be pleased by the attention, but there was also something tentative about him, as if he'd lost his grip on this particular reality—the false reality of a crowd's adoration at a place like Cannes—and was very slowly getting it back.

Reclaiming that false reality is likely to do Depp more harm than good. A 2018 *Rolling Stone* profile by Stephen Rodrick, written in the aftermath of the Depp-Heard breakup, showed the actor spending much of his time locked away in a mansion fortress, guzzling expensive wine, and nursing the depths of his melancholy. Depp is an adult; he's about to turn 60. He has made his own decisions and created his own problems. But I don't think anyone who truly cares about acting and actors should feel happy about what he's become. To see him looking as if all the life has been sucked out of him—not to mention the creeping jowlishness, the deepening frown lines, and other physical indignities that come with getting older—is akin to watching a bird fall from the sky, though birds don't bring about their own downfall. Depp is a nest of tragedies, an extraordinarily gifted man who has most likely hurt others, as well as himself. He's his own worst enemy, and no matter how loudly the crowd cheers for you, there's no valor in that. ◻

I don't think anyone who cares about acting and actors should feel happy about what he's become

REVIEWS

THE BEST FROM CANNES



The Zone of Interest
Chilling and artful, Jonathan Glazer's first film in 10 years follows a Nazi officer and his family as they build their dream life in the shadow of Auschwitz.



Killers of the Flower Moon
Martin Scorsese has adapted David Grann's book, about the plot to kill off rich Osage Indians in 1920s Oklahoma, into a work of great poetic mournfulness.



The Pot au Feu
In Anh Hung Tran's lush romance, set in 1880s France, a gourmet and the cook who works for him (Benoît Magimel and Juliette Binoche) bond for life over the joy of cooking.

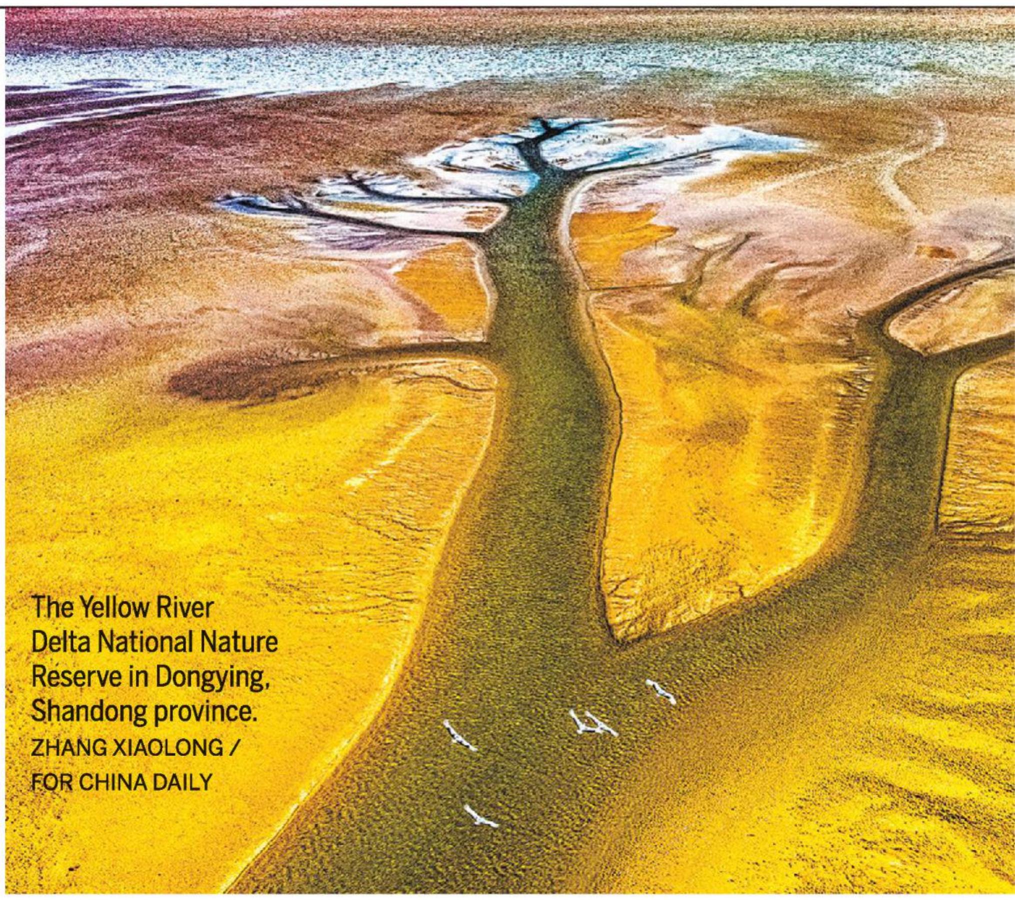


Fallen Leaves
Lost souls meet in Helsinki in this glorious deadpan romance from Finnish master Aki Kaurismaki.

CHINA WATCH
PRESENTED BY CHINA DAILY 中国日报

Yellow River protection stepped up

Water replenishment, conservation efforts paying off



The Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve in Dongying, Shandong province. ZHANG XIAOLONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

BY SUN SHANGWU, LI JING and ZHAO RUIXUE

As a chilly spring breeze lightly brushed his tanned face, Wang Lidong walked around the Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve in Dongying, Shandong province.

He checked water conservation projects and also the water level in the wetlands — part of a day's work for Wang, who has been involved with protecting the reserve for three decades.

"The environment at the reserve has significantly improved over the years. It is now home to many birds, so all the hard work has been worthwhile," said Wang, an engineer working on the wetland restoration project at the reserve, which is situated on a large expanse of wetlands in the Yellow River Delta.

The river, China's second longest, zigzags its way through a plateau blanketed with rich soil. It carries millions of tons of soil east every year, some of it reaching the estuary, where the waterway flows into the Bohai Sea in Dongying, forming the wetlands.

President Xi Jinping has visited the nine provinces and autonomous regions along the river, and during his trips, emphasized the importance of ecological conservation and the concept that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets".

In October 2021, Xi inspected the Yellow River estuary, including the reserve in Dongying. He checked the waterway's tributaries, the wetlands' environment and learned about ecological protection and high-quality development in the Yellow River Basin.

"The Yellow River is our mother river, and conservation is the precondition. We must make unremitting efforts to protect it," Xi said during an inspection visit to the estuary.

The estuary wetlands, typical of those found elsewhere in the world, include lakes, swamps and tidal flats.

In following Xi's concept of ecological civilization, Wang said the work carried out in Dongying has focused mainly on protecting and restoring the wetlands, and acts as a model for the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature.

In recent years, the city has spent 1.36 billion yuan ($196.7 million) to support 17 wetland protection and restoration projects in the delta, including water supplements, cordgrass treatment, and offshore biodiversity conservation, which has helped strengthen the city's wetland ecosystem.

At the reserve, a large expanse of water stretches out into the distance. Reeds sway in the wind along both sides of a wooden walkway. Aerial views show a series of connected waterways, which resemble slender veins.

Back in the 1980s and '90s, coastal erosion, seawater encroachment and drought caused the wetlands to shrink. Wang said the delta's rich wetland ecosystems were also seriously threatened by oil production, industrial waste pollution and land reclamation.

The reserve, established in October 1992 to protect the wetlands, covers about 590 square miles, with the wetlands comprising most of the area.

"As water is crucial to maintaining the healthy ecological system in the wetlands, we have been replenishing water at the site," Wang said. He added that the abundance of water in the wetlands will significantly prevent destruction of the ecological system from the encroachment of seawater.

In the past three years, more than 126.8 billion gallons of water from the Yellow River has been replenished at the reserve. Data from the reserve's management committee show that this work has effectively alleviated soil salinization in the wetlands.

"We have built channels and sluices to ensure that water is replenished when needed at the wetlands," Wang said.

The reserve management committee divided the wetlands into 49 areas based on the growth conditions for animals and plants, ensuring that each area receives the correct amount of water.

Nurtured by the waterway, the animals and plants are





The Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve boasts rich wetland systems and provides good living conditions for wild birds. The number of avian species in the Yellow River Delta has risen to 373. PHOTOS BY GUO XULEI / XINHUA AND LIU YUELIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



thriving, Wang said.

Work is being carried out in Dongying to restore seagrass beds and native plants growing along waterways in the wetlands.

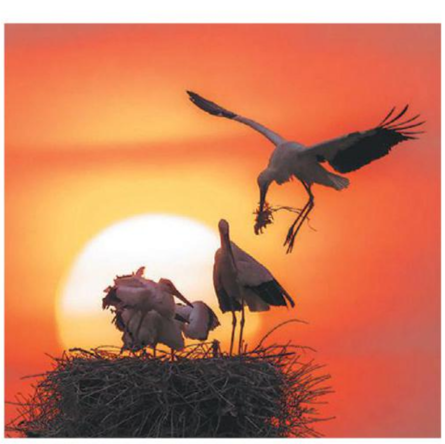
In April, groups of birds were seen resting on ponds on both sides of a road leading to the reserve. Some birds skimmed across the water surface.

Shan Kai, a senior engineer at the reserve, said: "The environment in the delta provides good living conditions for the birds."

Statistics show that the number of avian species in the delta has risen from 187 in the years after the reserve was established to 373.

Last year, 470 chicks were born to Oriental storks at the reserve, while 315 red-crowned cranes were observed wintering at the wetlands.

The city is now working to build a Yellow River Estuary National Park to better preserve wetlands and biodiversity in the Yellow River Delta.



Birds in the Yellow River Delta reserve. ZHANG XIAOLONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Shanghai remains magnet for foreign investment

BY SHI JING and LIN SHUJUAN

French banking group BNP Paribas' confidence in the Chinese market has remained undeterred by global market volatility and the pandemic.

The group's continued investment is proof of this: It has placed 5.3 billion yuan ($753 million) of additional equity in its China joint ventures over the past 18 months and expects to further invest 1.5 billion to 2 billion yuan in the next 12 months. The company has founded 11 joint ventures with Chinese partners, including State-owned enterprises, privately owned companies and financial institutions.

At least 122 foreign asset management companies from 13 countries have set up operations in the Lujiazui financial hub in eastern Shanghai. Of the 1,736 licensed financial institutions registered in the city, 539 are foreign financial service providers. Nearly half of the foreign banks, jointly-held asset management companies and foreign insurance companies operating in China have set up regional headquarters in Shanghai.

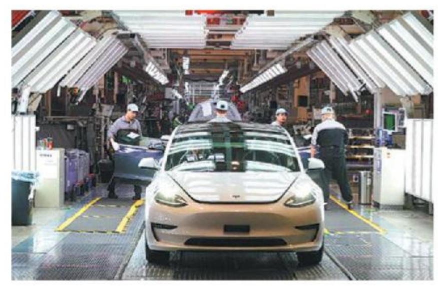
Many initial attempts to facilitate the two-way opening-up of the Chinese financial market have been made in Shanghai.

JP Morgan, whose China headquarters is located in Shanghai, was given approval in August 2021 to set up the first wholly foreign-owned securities company in China.

Shanghai's role as an international financial center has been consolidated. Data from the Shanghai Municipal Development and Reform Commission show the total trading value in the city reached 2,933 trillion yuan last year, up from



Vehicles made by SAIC Motor, based in Shanghai, wait to be exported at a port in the city. FANG ZHE / XINHUA



Workers put final touches to a vehicle at Tesla's gigafactory in Shanghai. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

528 trillion yuan in 2012.

The progress made in the financial sector is just one example of the numerous efforts made by Shanghai to advance its two-way opening-up. The China International Import Expo, or CIIE, which has been held annually in the city since 2018, has served as an important platform for advancing China's all-round opening-up.

In addition to the $345.8 billion of intended deals reached at the past five expos, up to 2,000 products, technologies and services have made their China or global debuts at CIIE.

Swiss industrial group ABB has attended all five expos, globally showcasing its latest breakthroughs such as the gas leak detection technology ABB HoverGuard. ABB's China chairman Gu Chunyuan said the expo helps the company better understand market demand and the latest industry trends.

The China (Shanghai) Pilot Free Trade Zone, officially launched in 2013 and underwent expansion in 2015 and 2019, serves as one of the best examples of systematic innovation. The negative list for foreign investment, first adopted by the Shanghai FTZ when it was launched, was promoted nationwide in July 2017. In March, the Ministry of Commerce said efforts are being made to trim the national negative list to further relax the limit on foreign capital in certain areas.

Lingang Special Area, part of the Shanghai FTZ that was officially launched in August 2019, is a good example of Shanghai's advanced two-way opening-up.

Gu Jun, director of the Shanghai Municipal Development and Reform Commission, said that in recent years Lingang has formed a systematic opening-up mechanism featuring freedom of trade, investment, capital flow, transportation and employment, as well as the rapid connection of information.

Tesla has benefited from the systematic advantages in Lingang. It held the groundbreaking ceremony for its Lingang gigafactory in early January 2019, and the first car was completed at the facility 11 months later. Tesla's vice-president Tao Lin said: "Shanghai has provided Tesla with development opportunities in China."

The presence of foreign companies and investment is of great importance to Shanghai. The city has held global investment promotion conferences annually since 2020, reaching 850 cooperation agreements and attracting investment of about 1.8 trillion yuan.

Some 70,000 foreign companies have set up operations in Shanghai. A total of 907 multinational companies have set up regional headquarters in the city, which is also home to 538 multinationals' regional research and development centers.

Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.

Satya Nadella The man who has helmed Microsoft since 2014 talks AI, jobs, and the case for developing the new technology despite growing concerns

What is going to change in the workplace with the adoption of AI? AI is moving from being autopilot to being a co-pilot that helps us at our work. You put the human in the center, and then create this tool around them that empowers them and takes the drudgery away from work. How much time do we spend just coordinating and how much time do we spend creating—which is what gives us real joy? If we can tilt that balance towards more creativity, we will all be better off.

What are you doing to address concerns about job loss? One of the things that I'm most excited about is how [AI] democratizes access to new skills. That will be a massive increase in total developers, because the barriers to being a software developer are going to come down.

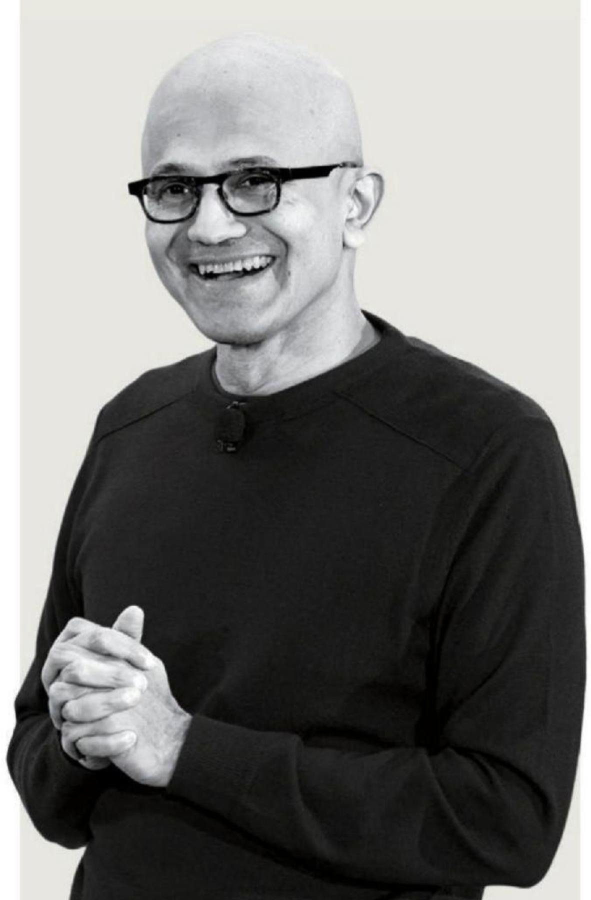
Would you agree to any limits on use of AI for military applications? We've always said that we want to make sure that the best technology that Microsoft has is available to the very institutions that protect our freedom.

What's your response to calls to put on the brakes on training new AI? There are two sets of things that are important for us to have robust discussions about. The first one is here and now, how are the real-world consequences of any AI being deployed. Second, how to make sure that any intelligence system we create is in control and aligned with human values. But ultimately it's for the regulators and the governments involved to make these decisions.

There's an argument that the developers behind AI don't even quite understand the results that AI is generating. Should that give us pause? I think we shouldn't abdicate our own responsibility. It's a most stochastic complex system [using random and probabilistic elements]. There are many stochastic complex systems we deal with. We characterize them using lots of other evaluation tests and make sure that they're safely deployed. So it's not the first time we are dealing with complexity in the real world. [We see it in] biology, environment.

What is one unintended consequence of AI that regulators should watch out for?

Bias. One of the key things is to ensure that when you're using these technologies, that by some unintended way, biased outputs are not causing real-world harm.



JASON REDMOND—AFP/GETTY IMAGES

We just observe systems like biology. We created AI. Should that make us more cautious? The genesis of the computer industry was creating tools for the human mind, so that we can do more, understand more. So creating technologies that allow us as humans to be able to increase our knowledge, do science, help the human condition is the core to enlightenment. And so therefore trying to say "Now is the time to stop" doesn't seem the right approach.

There seems to be an urgency to make sure we're using AI to the best of our abilities. What is driving that? Shareholders? The research community? Executives at Microsoft? The world's economic growth has stalled. The last time economic growth could be attributed to information technology was when PCs became ubiquitous. If we really have a goal that everybody in the world should have economic growth and it should be climate positive, we need to build new technology that achieves both those goals. That's why I think AI is exciting. What if we can have that type of economic growth that we enjoyed in the early parts of the 20th century, but this time around it's much more even—not just in the West Coast of the United States [but] everywhere in the world. That's a beautiful world that I aspire towards. —ALANA SEMUELS


POWERED BY THE MAKERS OF NyQuil™
WHEN YOU REALLY REALLY NEED TO SLEEP.
NEW!
VICKS
NEW active ingredient. NEW directions. Read label.
ZzzQuil™
ULTRA
NIGHTTIME SLEEP-AID
Doxylamine succinate, 25 mg nighttime sleep aid
12 TABLETS
From the makers of NyQuil
Clinically tested, proven effective
actual size
1 TABLET PER DOSE
STAY ASLEEP LONGER*
*VS. CONTROL - CLINICAL DATA ON FILE WITH FDA IN SUPPORT OF NDA, READ EACH LABEL. USE AS DIRECTED. KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN



TIMECO2

THE CLIMATE ACTION PLATFORM

TIME CO2 brings together the information, products and community
to accelerate climate action and elevate climate leaders.

FIND OUT MORE AT CO2.COM